

KISMET

BY

EDWARD KNOBLAUCH

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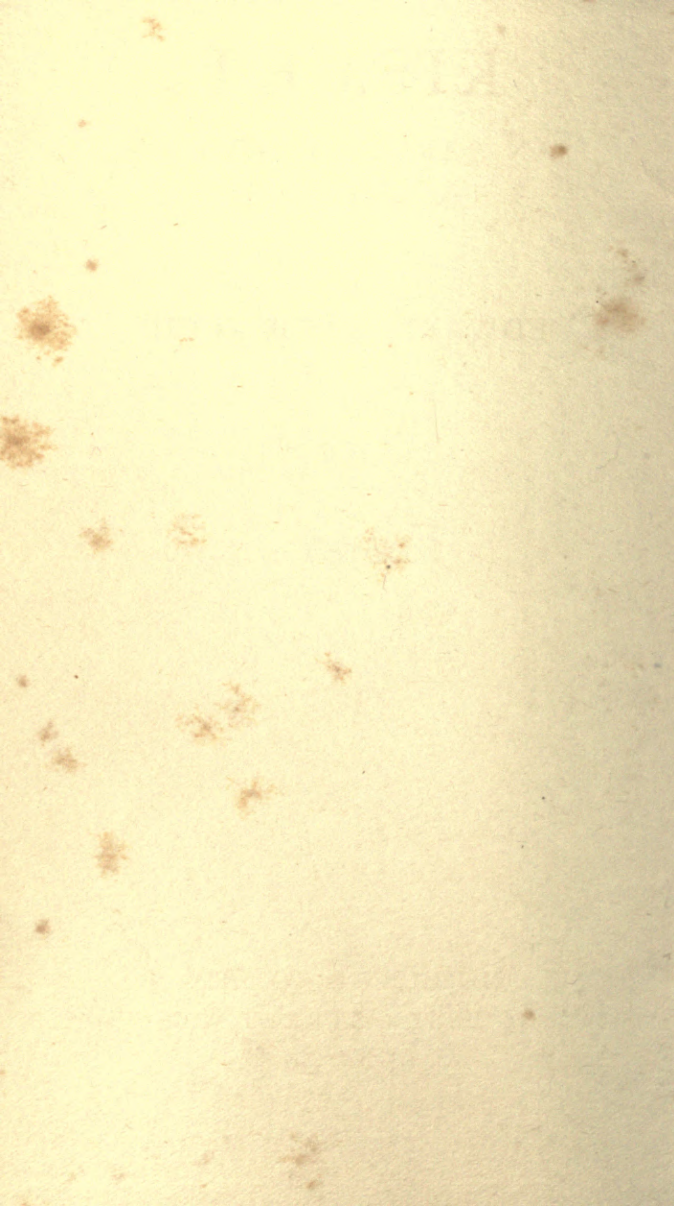
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KISMET



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AN "ARABIAN NIGHT"

IN THREE ACTS

BY

EDWARD KNOBLAUCH

METHUEN & CO. LTD.

36 ESSEX STREET W.C.

LONDON

First Published in 1912

TO THE MEMORY OF
RICHARD BURTON

ONE OF THE GREATEST OF ENGLISHMEN AND ONE
OF THE LEAST UNDERSTOOD ; WITHOUT
WHOM THIS PLAY NEVER COULD
HAVE BEEN WRITTEN

CHARACTERS

(In order of their appearance)

MEN

HAJJ

THE MUEZZIN

THE IMAM MAHMUD

A MUFTI

THE GUIDE NASIR

THE SHEIKH JAWAN

THE BEGGAR KASIM

AMRU } Shopkeepers
ZAYD }

AMRU'S APPRENTICE

ZAYD'S APPRENTICE

THE CALIPH ABDALLAH

THE WAZIR ABU BAKR

THE WAZIR MANSUR

KAFUR, Mansur's sworder

AFIFE, his secretary

THE CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH

AN ATTENDANT OF MANSUR

A CHAMBERLAIN OF THE CALIPH

A HERALD OF THE CALIPH

A BLIND MAN

A CHINAMAN

THE GAOLER KUTAYT

WOMEN

MARSINAH, Hajj's daughter

NARJIS, her nurse

KABIRAH, an old woman

MISKAH, a slave

KUT-AL-KULUB, Mansur's first wife.

GUARDS, WAZIRS, DIGNITARIES, COURTIERS, SOLDIERS,
EUNUCHS, SHOPKEEPERS, BUYERS, ETC.

WOMEN OF THE HARIM, DANCERS, SLAVES, ETC.

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

THE MAN

THE WOMAN

THE STORY TELLER

THE JUGGLER

THE DANCER

ACT I

MORNING

- SCENE I. A Street before the Mosque of the Carpenters.
- II. The Suk (Bazaar Street) of the Tailors.
- III. The Courtyard of a poor House.
- IV. A Hall in the Wazir Mansur's Mansion.

ACT II

AFTERNOON

- SCENE I. A Hall in the Wazir Mansur's Mansion. (*Same as Act I., Scene IV.*)
- II. The Courtyard of a poor House. (*Same as Act I., Scene III.*)
- III. The Diwan (Audience Hall) of the Caliph's Palace.
- IV. The Prison of the Palace.

ACT III

EVENING

- SCENE I. The Hammam of Mansur's Harim.
- II. A Street before the Mosque of the Carpenters. (*Same as Act I., Scene I.*)

The scene is laid in the Baghdad of the "Arabian Nights."

The action takes place from morning to night.

CAST OF THE PLAY

AS PRODUCED AT THE GARRICK THEATRE, LONDON,
19TH APRIL, 1911

MEN

HAJJ	Oscar Asche
THE MUEZZIN	Alfred Bristowe
THE IMAM MAHMUD	Charles A. Doran
A MUFTI	Arthur Trantom
THE GUIDE NASIR	R. Ian Penny
THE SHEIKH JAWAN	Caleb Porter
THE BEGGAR KASIM	Tripp Edgar
AMRU	Athol Forde
ZAYD	R. F. Anson
THE CALIPH ABDALLAH... ..	Ben Webster
THE WAZIR ABU BAKR	Ewan Brooke
THE WAZIR MANSUR	Herbert Grimwood
KAFUR	George Relph
AFIFE	A. Winspeare
CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH	D. Atherton
AN ATTENDANT OF MANSUR	H. Franklin
A BLIND MAN	E. Adeney
A CHINAMAN	Gordon Harker
A CHAMBERLAIN OF THE CALIPH	G. Fitzgerald
THE GAOLER KUTAYT	J. Fritz Russell

WOMEN

MARSINAH	Lily Brayton
NARJIS	Bessie Major
KABIRAH	D. England
THE ALMAH	Nancy Denvers
MISKAH	Muriel Hutchinson
KUT-AL-KULUB	Saba Raleigh

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

THE MAN	Ernest Leeman
THE WOMAN	Dorothy Moulton
THE STORY TELLER	Ewan Brooke
THE JUGGLER	E. Selton
THE DANCER	Nancy Denvers

The Play produced by OSCAR ASCHE

The Music composed by CHRISTOPHER WILSON

The Costumes designed by PERCY ANDERSON

CAST OF THE PLAY

AS PRODUCED AT THE KNICKERBOCKER THEATRE,
NEW YORK, 25TH DECEMBER, 1911

MEN

HAJJ	...	...	...	...	Otis Skinner
THE MUEZZIN	...	...	...	...	T. Tamamoto
THE IMAM MAHMUD	...	...	...	...	Del de Louis
A MUFTI	...	...	...	...	John Webster
THE GUIDE NASIR	...	...	...	...	Sydney Mather
THE SHEIKH JAWAN	...	...	...	...	Sheridan Block
THE BEGGAR KASIM	...	...	...	...	Macey Harlan
AMRU	...	...	...	...	Daniel Jarrett
ZAYD	...	...	...	...	Harrison Carter
AMRU'S APPRENTICE	...	...	...	...	Gregory Kelly
THE CALIPH ABDALLAH	...	...	...	...	Fred Eric
THE WAZIR ABU BAKR	...	...	...	...	Henry Mitchell
THE WAZIR MANSUR	...	...	...	...	Hamilton Revelle
KAFUR	...	...	...	...	George Relph
AFIFE	...	...	...	...	Bennett Kilpack
CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH	...	...	...	...	Richard Scott
AN ATTENDANT OF MANSUR	...	...	...	...	William Lorenz
A CHAMBERLAIN OF THE CALIPH	...	...	...	...	Thomas Audley
THE GAOLER KUTAYT	...	...	...	...	Martin Sanders

WOMEN

MARSINAH	...	...	...	...	Rita Jolivet
NARJIS	...	...	...	...	Georgia Woodthorpe
KABIRAH	...	...	...	...	Amelia Barleon
THE ALMAH	...	...	...	...	Violet Romer
MISKAH	...	...	...	...	Merle Maddern
KUT-AL-KULUB	...	...	...	...	Eleanor Gordon

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

THE MAN	...	...	...	...	Ernest Leeman
THE WOMAN	...	...	...	...	Roma Devonne
THE STORY TELLER	...	...	...	...	Mervyn Rentoul
THE JUGGLER	...	...	...	...	Youna
THE DANCER	...	...	...	...	Violet Romer

The Play produced by HARRISON GREY FISKE

The Music composed by WILLIAM FURST

The Costumes designed by PERCY ANDERSON

NOTES

The exclamation "Yehh!" which occurs in the play, is an Arab cry of surprise; the exclamation "Awah!" or "Wah!" a cry of grief, synonymous with "Alas!" In both cases the final "h" is pronounced gutturally, something like the "ch" in the German "Ach!" or Scotch "Och!"

The rhymed prose which occurs in moments of emotion is a peculiarity of Arab speech and literature. There are endless examples of it in Burton's "Arabian Nights."

In addressing a person, "O" is always used as "O Hajj." If "O" is left out it is the sign of deliberate insult. This "O" is not emphasised except when expedient.

KISMET

DAWN

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

A large arch of Arabian design, with small doors right and left, frames in the whole picture.

The MAN enters from the door of his house left, seats himself and sings :

Lo ! Still the stars of latter night are spread !
Yet hath sleep stolen from my lonely bed.
So will I sit me on my rooftop's height,
To cool my sadness till the dawning red.

The WOMAN enters from her house right, seats herself and sings :

Yehh ! Still the moon hangs on the lips of night
To mock my solitude with love-delight.
O heavy hour of a longing breast,
Thy weight will crush me ere the break of light !

The MAN

Wah ! That some song might soothe my soul
oppress'd,
Some ancient melody of days more bless'd.

The WOMAN

Awah, that some strange tale of long ago
Might by its magic bring my bosom rest !

14 BEFORE THE CURTAIN

BOTH

O Thou, Bestower of all things, bestow
This benediction on Thy servant low !

*The STORY TELLER enters through the curtains
and speaks :*

STORY TELLER. Praise be to Allah, the King of all Kings, the Creator of all things ! Who like to a carpet hath spread, the Earth to our tread. And even as a tent, set up the firmament, overhead. And on Mohammed, his Prophet among men, the blessing of blessings again and again, Amen. (*He sits.*) But afterwards. Verily the works and words of those gone before us have become examples and admonitions to the men of our later day. And of such a kind is the story of Hajj, the beggar, who lived his life in this our peaceful city of Baghdad, one thousand years and one year ago. Now it is the tale of his day of the days that I will relate unto you, O auspicious listeners. Do ye take heed therein of the lesson taught by Fate, which the poets call Kismet. And mark well the chances and changes of time foredoomed to mortal man : lifting him now high, now sinking him low, even as the bucket in the well. (*He rises.*) But Allah alone is all knowing.

He withdraws.

The MAN and WOMAN rise and sing :

I hearken with my heart upon the ground,
Nor from my breathless lips shall rise a sound :—
Awake, O day of days, and run thy round !

*Then they turn and re-enter their respective
houses. They have not seen each other.*

ACT I
MORNING

SCENE I. *A Street before the Mosque of the Carpenters.*

(Right and left from the point of view of the actor.)

In the centre, steps lead up to the Mosque, which is on the right. Only the lower part of the minaret is visible. A large stone to the left of the steps forms a rough seat.

It is just before dawn, which rises rapidly, so that it is daylight by the end of the scene.

Asleep, on the stone, wrapped in his beggar's cloak of a hundred rags and patches, sits HAJJ, reclining against the angle of the wall. He is a man of about fifty, still in the full vigour of his manhood. His beard is thin and unkempt; but his face is keen, shrewd and full of humour. At a glance he shows himself to be a man of the people, who lives by his wits, untroubled by what the morrow may bring him. At present he is sleeping the sleep of the just to the tune of a hearty snore.

After a few moments of peace, steps are heard in the alley left, and the MUEZZIN, an old man of seventy, appears with a lanthorn and a large key. He goes to the door of the Mosque and unlocks it.

Cocks begin to crow far and near.

The "brush" of the dawn appears in the sky.

HAJJ (*disturbed by the clatter, turns and yawns prodigiously—stretching himself.*)

HAJJ. In the name of Allah,—Day?

THE MUEZZIN. (*Coming towards him.*) Peace be on thee, O Hajj.

HAJJ. And on thee, peace and blessing, O my friend.
(*The MUEZZIN enters the Mosque.*)

(IMAM MAHMUD, *a venerable white bearded sage, appears. HAJJ stifles a yawn, sits up, and assumes his beggar's attitude—the right hand out, the head dejectedly on one side.*)

HAJJ. (*As the IMAM comes to him in a whining sing-song.*) Alms, for the love of Allah! For the love of Allah, alms!

MAHMUD. (*Handing HAJJ a small round loaf.*) Take! The Giver giveth thee this. (*He crosses in front of HAJJ and goes up the steps.*)

HAJJ. (*Taking the bread.*) Verily, thy good deeds shall witness for thee on the day of judgment, O Mahmud.

MAHMUD. (*Stopping.*) The peace upon thee and a full harvest of tears and pity for thy poverty.

HAJJ. Nay, sooner pray it be a full hand of silver and gold.

MAHMUD. That shall be even as Allah foredooms. Naught befalls us but what His pen hath written.

HAJJ. Praise be to Allah, the One, the Omnipotent.

MAHMUD. And to Mohammed his Prophet, whom Allah bless and preserve. (*He goes into the Mosque.*)

(HAJJ *looks after him, grunts, and then turns and fumbles behind the stone, pulling out a chipped, earthen jug of water. He then mumbles "In the name of Allah," drinks from the jug and munches his bread, smacking his lips loudly.*)

(Meanwhile, from the minaret the voice of the MUEZZIN is heard calling to prayer, and other distant calls to prayer may be heard from various quarters.)

Allah is Almighty, Allah is Almighty !

There is no God but Allah ! There is no God but Allah !

Come ye to prayer ! Come ye to salvation !

Prayer is better than sleep ! Prayer is better than sleep !

No God is there but Allah !

(Steps resound in the streets. HAJJ quickly conceals his bread and jug behind the stone. Men now come at intervals by the two alleys and enter the Mosque. At the threshold they take off their slippers with their left hand, entering with the right foot, ejaculating, "In the name of Allah.")

HAJJ. Alms for a starving brother. Bind a body and soul together !—O master ! Thy large brow proclaims an open heart. A danik ! A fils ! *(The MAN gives a coin and passes on.)* Heaven hath seen this, O my master. In the name of the Compassionating, the Compassionate ! A blessing on thy white beard. Thou art nearing thy grave ! Buy thy salvation from thy slave. *(The MAN passes on murmuring "Allah will give it thee.")* Nothing. May'st thou burn for it, O thou dog ! *(To another.)* O brother, mine eyes have failed me ! *(He rolls up his eyes.)* Hast thou a blind father or one dearest to thee groping in darkness ? *(The MAN gives a coin and passes on.)* A dirham ! The Bestower requite it thee, O my lord. *(To another.)* O Azir, my master, I see thee well, though it scarce be day. Is he better, thy son, the light of thy house ? Be his fever abated ? *(The MAN passes on muttering "Allah will provide.")* Nought ? May the Ghuls suck away thy bastard's breath. *(To another.)* O

stranger! Not so quickly. Haste is from Hell; Heaven will wait for thee. (*To a young man.*) O fair youth, a trifle. On my knees have I lain here these endless years. (*The MAN gives him a coin.*) The Protector increase thy weal. (*To the MUFTI, an old man.*) O Mufti—a word. Thou knowest the bitterness of a long life and a weary. I am young, alas. All my sad days stretch before me.

THE MUFTI. Please Allah to-morrow——

HAJJ. (*Getting between the MUFTI and the steps of the Mosque.*) Thou dost ever say to-morrow.

THE MUFTI. (*Laughing.*) And is not to-morrow ever to-morrow?

HAJJ. True. The stench of thy soul lessens not from dawn to dawn.

THE MUFTI. Out of my way. (*He pushes past HAJJ into the Mosque.*)

HAJJ. With joy and gladness—for thy way leads to damnation. (*Several men enter singly and by twos as HAJJ continues in a sing-song tone.*) Glory be to Allah! Upon Allah dependeth daily bread. Thy wealth is not thine own, O rich man. Thou art as poor as the poorest. Allah alone giveth, and what he giveth belongeth not to thee. Thy gold is but a blessing to become a blessing. Then open thy purse and let the afflicted bend to the holy House of Meccah for thee, and every danik out of thy hand will return to thee a thousandfold through the prayers of the poor.

(*Men have gone into the Mosque, some giving coin, others passing on. From the street on the left the guide NASIR enters conducting the SHEIKH JAWAN, an old man, who is leaning on two black slaves and followed by two others. He is clothed completely in white, his face veiled by a "Taylasan," a scarf hiding his beard. He is over sixty and paralysed in his legs, but*

his eyes are still full of fire. TWO SLAVES retire. Slowly the SHEIKH mounts the steps supported by the other TWO SLAVES.

(HAJJ catches hold of the hem of his cloak.)

HAJJ. Alms, for the love of Allah! For the love of Allah, alms!

JAWAN. *(Turning.)* O Hajj, thou?

HAJJ. *(Surprised, rising and following him.)* Thou knowest me?

JAWAN. Thou still here mumbling for crusts? *(He laughs, a nasal laugh, mockingly.)* He, he, he!

(NASIR takes off JAWAN'S slippers.)

HAJJ. *(On the Mosque steps.)* Who art thou?

JAWAN. Who am I? He, he! Who am I? He, he, he!

(He turns with his slaves and goes off into the Mosque followed by the guide NASIR.)

(HAJJ looks after him mystified and riveted by a haunting memory; then slowly regains his seat, counting his profits as he does so. "One, two three—five.")

(Meanwhile KASIM, a young, ragged, one-eyed beggar, has come and sat down on HAJJ'S seat. He is busy tying some strips round one of his legs, quite unconscious of usurping anyone's rights. HAJJ is about to sit, when he turns, and, seeing KASIM, exclaims an amazed "Yehh!" He comes slowly up to the intruder and touches him provokingly on the arm.)

HAJJ. *(Squatting.)* And what may thy business be?

KASIM. Canst thou not see? I am a beggar even as thou.

HAJJ. Thou—even as I? Thou? Knowest thou what thou say'st?

KASIM. My ears can hear my tongue.

HAJJ. O monstrous piece of impudence ! A beggar even as I ? 'Tis plain thou art a stranger to Baghdad.

KASIM. Thou hast said it. I come from afar. My name's Kasim. And thou ?

HAJJ. I ? I ? Ha ! ha ! (*Patronisingly.*) O thou poor fool. But there, thou art a stranger. I ? I am Hajj—Hajj, the beggar.

KASIM. Hajj ? A pilgrim ? Then thou hast been to Holy Meccah ?

HAJJ. Not I ! Never a foot have I stirred beyond our city walls. My parents called me Hajj at my birth, so that the sacred title might win me added pity from the passer-by. Not a child in the quarter but calleth me thus by name. I have sat upon that stone these fifty summers and winters, drinking the sun, and more oft than not the moon too, scorning the pent-up sleep of a bed.

KASIM. (*Sneeringly.*) These fifty summers ? Sayst thou so ?

HAJJ. (*Excitedly.*) Yea ! And before me my father sat there, superb in rags, and before him, his ; and so on to the beginning without beginning. That stone, O Kasim, is my legacy, my right, my stronghold. Not till this hour hath man dared what thou darest.

KASIM. Then this hour endeth thy kingdom. I am come to conquer.

HAJJ. I pray thee, O maggotty head, bandy no words. Go get thee to yon corner (*He points to the corner left*) if it like thee. Other swine have grovelled there in their time. My vilest enemy sat there once, these many weary years since. Take his place.

KASIM. I'll not budge from here.

HAJJ. How sayst thou ? Not budge ? A scum like thou ? A nail-pairing ? A goat's cheese at noon-

tide? Not budge? We shall see, by Allah! We shall see!

(He seizes him and pushes him towards the corner.)

KASIM. Let go! Let go, I say! Ho, Moslems, come ye to my help! Let go!

HAJJ. *(Holding KASIM at arm's length and kicking him.)* Let go? There! How's that to thy taste? Swallow that, an thou art an-hungered. A dainty dish of foot, and more to follow. One—two—three! Another mouthful?

(NASIR, the Guide of the Sheikh, has come out of the Mosque and stands on the steps.)

NASIR. O Hajj! By the All-knowing, what's this?

HAJJ. He'd take my seat — this nothing from nowhere.

KASIM. *(Rubbing himself.)* I want not his seat.

HAJJ. Not now,—now that I have made thee feel the value of thine own.

(KASIM crawls down to the stone left, nursing his kicks.)

HAJJ. *(Sits in his seat.)* A joyous day indeed and a well begun! What with this one-eyed dog, and thy miserly stranger—*(breaking off.)* Allah! Who is he, O Nasir?

NASIR. *(Evasively.)* A man of the men. I know not.

HAJJ. O brother of truth, thou knowest full well. Thou art guiding him, he lodges at thy Khan. He called me by name. Who is he?

NASIR. *(After a moment of hesitating.)* Harkee, O Hajj. I have a plan to offer thee. An thou wilt fall in with my plotting, 'twill mean money to both of us.

HAJJ. Money? No harm in that. Speak.

NASIR. This old man of mine has been a famous highwayman in his hour. The White Sheikh they were used to call him.

HAIJ. The White Sheikh—he?

NASIR. Our Caliph deceased set his troops upon him oft and oftener. In one of his attacks, he captured most of the robber's band—his little son amongst them, a mere stripling at the time.

HAIJ. Say on.

NASIR. The boy was spared for his beauty. If he still be of the living, his age must reach nigh on thirty summers. Yet all these endless years whilst the last Caliph ruled, the Sheikh dared not enter Baghdad. Not till now, that the young monarch hath mounted the throne, hath the father ventured at last in search of his son.

HAIJ. A touching tale! And how forsooth are we to coin wealth of this?

NASIR. Did'st thou not mark how broken, how stricken, the old man is? Never was there such a repentant sinner. All his moneys are spent in charities; all his hopes in the finding of his beloved son, Yusuf. The smallest word, the faintest promise from priest or soothsayer, and his hand darts into his purse. Now dost thou see dawn?

HAIJ. I am to cast myself into his path. What thou hast revealed, is to flow unto me as in a vision.

NASIR. Thou hast it. And it is agreed, whate'er he bestows on thee, we share by halves, like honest Moslems that we are.

HAIJ. So it please the Protector. Leave it to me.

NASIR. But harkee, O clever one, thou'lt do it carefully? Draw from all the deepest wells: a father's longing, a father's mad despair. Such like and more, if thou canst.

HAIJ. If I can? If I can? Did I not too have a son—many years gone to-day,—a babe fair as the moon! Was he not foully murdered? His throat cut across? And my wife, the balm of mine eyes, stolen away by mine enemy? Yea, sat he not where yon dog sits now—the slaughterer of my

race? Doth not yon stone make my soul ever cry aloud for blood revenge?

NASIR. So thou, too, hast felt its fire—a father's love?

HAJJ. Felt it? Hearken to this, O Nasir—and Allah pardon me for unveiling the veiled sex. I have a daughter now of fourteen summers, the child of a late spring by another wife, who is dead, alas! The maid is all that is left me on earth; dear to me above the promises of Paradise. Yet the day will come when she will be wed and wived. And she will bear the burden of another's posterity. But mine own race, the blood of my fathers, once I am called to rest, where will it be? O brother, I am like unto a date-palm that groweth aslant the pool, and whose fruit hath fallen into the waters.

(Men begin to come out of the Mosque and wander off by the two alleys).

(Dawn is giving place to daylight).

NASIR. Prayer is over. We must not be found together.

(NASIR retires to the alley left, and beckons to the TWO BLACK SLAVES, who join him.)

(Meanwhile, other men are passing HAJJ, who begins in a sing-song tone, but has left his seat so as to intercept the Sheikh.)

HAJJ. Alms for the love of—

KASIM. *(Whining).* Alms for the love of Allah!

HAJJ. *(to KASIM).* Silence, thou dog!—*(continuing)*
For the love of Allah, alms. The grave is darkness.
Charity its lamp. Learn to love poverty. Be good
and enter Paradise. Alms, for the love of Allah!
For the love of Allah, alms!

(*The SHEIKH JAWAN re-appears from the Mosque, pausing on the steps, supported by his TWO SLAVES. JAWAN conceals his face from HAJJ with his scarf.*)

HAJJ. (*Rising.*) O Sheikh of sheikhs, the Peace upon thee. When thou spokest before, the eyes of my memory were closed. Now they are open and recall thy bounty of other days.

JAWAN. Dost thou know me, indeed?

HAJJ. I see thy soul clear as in crystal. Thou art come from afar in search of some one long lost. 'Tis him thou seekest, thy son.

JAWAN. Yehh! This is strange. Shall I reach my desire?

HAJJ. Thou shalt see thy son this day.

JAWAN. Even though the curses of my foes stand between me and Allah?

HAJJ. Thy prayers have killed their curses.

JAWAN. Wilt thou swear to that?

HAJJ. By Him, the All-seeing, the All-hearing, the All-knowing I swear it to thee.

JAWAN. Will thy ragged saintliness bless me?

HAJJ. Allah's blessing upon thee and thy enterprise. May thy foes be confounded, and thy hopes rounded.

(*A slight pause—then JAWAN bursts into uncontrollable laughter—"he, he, he, he, he!"*)

JAWAN. O Hajj! Dost guess what thou hast done? See! (*He withdraws the scarf from his face.*) Thou hast blest thine enemy. I am he who has sat at yon corner in the long ago.

HAJJ. (*Hoarsely.*) Jawan!

JAWAN. Yes, Jawan! He that stole thy wife and stabbed thy squealing brat and fled the city at night.

HAJJ. Jawan,—the beggar,—thou?

JAWAN. Jawan, the beggar, no longer Jawan the beggar. Nay, look not so amazed. My wild life hath oldened me more than thy tame life thee.

HAJJ. Jawan!

JAWAN. Dost thou doubt me? Hearken, then, and learn. Thy wife and I, that night of the nights, we rode out into the desert. A band of robbers found us. Time and lot made me their leader. Twenty-five years I was their chief. Twenty-five years the Caliph made war on me as on a king—his equal. And I was his equal in power, in prowess, in all—yea, even though he captured my son, the son of thy wife, thy beautiful Gulnar.

HAJJ. O hog, hog-fathered! Allah ruin thee for ever.

JAWAN (*sneeringly*). Thou dost forget thy blessings of a moment since. (*He crosses to Nasir and the other slaves.*)

HAJJ. I blessed thee not. I blessed an unknown.

JAWAN. No, no, *me* by the Most High, the Glorious—me. And 'tis thus through thee, that I shall find my son again. Thou hast recalled thy curses. The spell is broken at last.

HAJJ. Thou shalt not live to find him. (*He springs towards Jawan*).

(*The other TWO SLAVES draw ugly looking dirks and ward off HAJJ.*)

(*HAJJ stands impotent and panting—"Wah!"*)

JAWAN. Said I not I was King? Allah send thee a long life, Hajj, and a happy.

HAJJ. Allah send thee the foul fiend and a thousand fires.

JAWAN. Too late, O brother. Thou hast stopped Heaven's ears with thy blessings! Thy curses fall on deafness.—Behold! A poor return for thy bounty! (*He throws a purse at HAJJ.*) Up and away!

(*The SLAVES turn with JAWAN and move away by the alley left, NASIR preceding them.*)

HAIJ. (*Desperately.*) Take back thy blood money. I'll not swallow my son's blood! Take it back, O thou grey-beard of hell! Take it!

(*JAWAN has disappeared; his laughter, "He, he, he!" is heard dying away in the distance. KASIM crawls from his seat toward the purse.*)

HAIJ. Laugh! Laugh to split thy spleen! But by the Decree, thy day shall set! For I have found thee! Thou art alive and here,—and I too—I am alive. (*Going up to KASIM.*) Dost thou hear? Dost thou?—I have found him! He is back in Baghdad, he who sat where thou sittest, the butcher of my race! I shall meet him at last—hold him by the throat, the dog of dogs, and (*taking KASIM by the throat.*) I shall strangle him with (*choking KASIM.*) These—two—thumbs of mine.

KASIM. (*Choking.*) Brother—protection!

HAIJ. (*Still continuing, in his fury.*) What though he be guarded by slaves with swords naked, and I, defenceless—

KASIM. (*Gasping.*) Awah!

HAIJ. I shall find a way to him. Buy it, if need be! —Buy? Yehh. (*He throws KASIM aside and turns to the purse.*) And with his gold. His! It smelleth of blood. Every coin a crime, every chink a cry for vengeance. Allah, be thou my witness! Only for this do I touch his accursed charity. Only for this!

KASIM. Look!

(*Several men come out of the Mosque.*)

HAIJ. (*Quickly thrusting the purse in his bosom, returns to his stone, beginning his sing-song without looking up.*) Alms for the love of Allah! For the love of Allah—

KASIM. Alms for the love of Allah ! For the love of All——

HAJJ. (*To KASIM.*) Silence, thou louse-trap !

(*NASIR re-enters rapidly.*)

NASIR. I've left him for an instant. He's praying at a tomb. The purse. How much is mine ?

HAJJ. The purse ?

NASIR. The purse he threw thee.

HAJJ. (*Innocently.*) I saw no purse.

NASIR. Saw no purse ? Thou art jesting. Out with it. Share.

HAJJ. Share ? Purse ? Know I what he threw or not ? Sit I here to count the droppings of the street ? A pretty patron thou didst serve me. Get thee gone ! Thou art a rogue, a thief !

NASIR. I, a rogue ? I, a thief ? (*To KASIM.*) 'Thou sawest him take the purse. (*HAJJ secretly drops the purse into his water-jug.*) I call thee to witness.

KASIM. I saw him spit on it and turn from it and curse it.

NASIR. (*Catching hold of KASIM.*) Thou hast it. Thou hast taken it for him.

KASIM. Alas, O brother, not I.

NASIR. Give it me ! Give it me ! 'Tis not thine to keep.

KASIM. Strip every rag from me—thou'lt not find it.

HAJJ. (*Gleefully.*) Strip him ! Strip him !

KASIM. (*Turning with fury to HAJJ.*) Thou hast it.

HAJJ. Aye, strip me too. Both of us, so it give thee pleasure. Thou shalt behold rare sights. Strip us—thy slave entreats thee.

(*One of JAWAN'S NEGROES appears from the alley.*)

NEGRO. O Nasir.

HAJJ. (*Pointing to the negro.*) Thy master calls !

NASIR. O thou villain ! I go to take my charge back to the inn. But after, as thou lovest life, look to thyself and thy safety.

(He hurries off after the NEGRO.)

HAJJ. *(Shouting after him.)* The Peace upon thee !
Ha, ha ha ! *(He takes the purse out of the water-jug, putting it into his breast.)*

KASIM. *(Laughing obsequiously.)* Ha ! Ha ! Ha !
(A slight pause.)

KASIM. *(Crawling over to HAJJ, cringing.)* O my master, and what is my share of the spoils ?

HAJJ. *(Imitating KASIM.)* "What is my share of the spoils ?" By Solomon's seal ring ! This purse—whether it be from Heaven or from Hell,—this hath been sent by Fate to me, and me alone. There is a purpose in this purse. The scroll of destiny unrolleth itself to mine eyes. I see the writing as in flames.

KASIM. The scroll ?

HAJJ. Lookee, all of us have an allotted hour. This is mine. Here's the talisman I have prayed for, many a year of waiting. The weapon to my revenge—Gold !

KASIM. What wilt thou do ?

HAJJ. I shall arise from the seat of dejection. *(Rises.)* My days of mourning are over. I shall get me to the hammam-bath. *(Walking about.)* These rags will I rip from me ; the waters shall wash away my weariness. Robes of ease and decency shall broaden my breast. No more the whining voice and bent brow, and trembling palm of poverty, but head back as a fighter of the faith, shoulders free, stride bold and commanding as a king's, yea, as he said, even as a king's.

(He walks excitedly up and down and throws his beggar's cloak on his stone.)

The IMAM MAHMUD has come out of the Mosque and stands amazed on the steps.)

MAHMUD. O Hajj. Are thy wits fled ? What means this ?

HAJJ. I am casting my beggardom from me.

MAHMUD. Thou?

HAJJ. Allah hath opened the Gate of Action to me.
(*Chinking his purse.*) With a golden key!

MAHMUD. O my son, I fear for thee the chances and changes of time.

HAJJ. Hath not the Prophet enjoined blood vengeance? I am resolved, O my father. Voyage is victory. Yet ere I go, thou who didst ever remember my misery,—take this voluntary for the poor. (*He gives MAHMUD some coin.*)

MAHMUD. May the Protector protect thee against all woe, may He forefend thee ever against thy foe.

KASIM. (*Going to HAJJ, still on his knees.*) And I—am I to have naught?

HAJJ. Thou? (*Pushing him to the stone.*) Take thou my stone, my ancestral throne! Wrapped in my royal robes, hold it thine own! As for me, life calls. The day is mine to joy! And when the night falleth, Allah allowing, I shall hold mine enemy in the hollow of my hand! (*He strides off to the left, his purse on high, full daylight upon him.*)

[CURTAIN]

SCENE II. *The Suk (Bazaar Street) of the Tailors.*

A narrow street, arched over, with shops on both sides. Arches left and right. A large centre arch at the back leads off to other parts of the bazaar.

(NOTE.—Much of the following action and dialogue occurs simultaneously, so as to produce a harmonious picture rather than separate impressions.)

In a shop left sits ZAYD, a thin, conceited man of forty; he has with him a tiny little apprentice, who is here, there and everywhere. In the shop right (AMRU'S shop), a somewhat older apprentice is unpacking bales of stuff.

It is early morning. The life of the street is awakening to the business of the day. As the curtain rises the shopkeepers are spreading out their wares. A SWEETMEAT-SELLER enters through the centre arch. He bows to a shopkeeper and passes on, squatting in the right corner, his back to the audience. His cry is, "Ho! Ho! Sweet-ts." FRUIT-GIRLS enter from the right and settle down in the left corner opposite him. Their cry is "Omani peaches, Osmani quinces! Sultani citrons! Li-mes!"

TWO BEDOUINS appear and walk solemnly down the street. A CHINAMAN enters, followed by a little boy carrying fowls. The CHINAMAN goes to the SWEETMEAT-SELLER and points to the sweets with his fan.

CHINAMAN. (In a squeaky voice.) *This! This! This! How much!*

SWEETSELLER. *Three daniks.*

CHINAMAN. *One! One! One!*

SWEETSELLER. *Two.*

CHINAMAN. (Turning away to the left.) *One!*

SWEETSELLER. (Rises and goes after him.) *One and a half.*

(*The CHINAMAN refuses to listen to him.*)

SWEETSELLER. (Sitting down again.) *Hell swallow all foreign dogs!*

(*JAWAN enters at the central arch supported by his TWO SLAVES and passes down the street.*)

(*The CHINAMAN goes to ZAYD's shop.*)

ZAYD'S APPRENTICE. *Allah enlarge thee, O traveller from the land of China.*

CHINAMAN. *Silk! Silk! Silk!*

ZAYD'S APPRENTICE. *Here's Persian silk, O my master! Rich, soft silk.*

CHINAMAN. (*Pulling it about.*) *No! China silk! China silk! This bad! Bad!* (*He walks away.*)

ZAYD'S APPRENTICE. (*Shouts after him.*) *Out on thee, thou cat-faced infidel!*

A BOY *with flowers comes and squats down near the fruit-girls. His cry is:*

“Jasmine and violets fine,
Pomegranate bloom and eglantine.”

AN OLD MAN *with a donkey appears laden with jars of olive oil, stops at ZAYD's shop and turns to the apprentice.*

THE OLD MAN (*to the apprentice.*) *Here's olive oil for thy master.*

BOY. *Is the jar full?*

THE OLD MAN. *Full as the number of my years.*

BOY. *Allah make them a thousand in number.*

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD *struts majestically through the Suk.*

NASIR, *the guide, enters, goes to ZAYD's shop and bargains for a sash; tries it on, rolling himself into it and out of it as ZAYD holds one end of it.*

TWO COURTESANS *appear in flimsy veils and gorgeous draperies. A YOUTH approaches them with a flower he has bought from the flower-boy.*

THE FIRST COURTESAN (*to the Youth.*) *Fair befall thee, O Youth! Art thou from Baghdad? Art thou a stranger?*

THE YOUTH. *I am yours from wherever I am; a captive to the moon of your faces.*

THE OTHER COURTESAN. *Thy glance is bright as the blade of a sword.*

THE YOUTH. *And thy tongue sharper, no doubt!*

THE PORTER (*with an immense bale on his head, to one of the Courtesans.*) *Must thou trip my heels, thou stinking armsful?*

THE COURTESAN. *Out of my way, thou son of a burnt father.*

AN OLD MAN (*to a Young One.*) *Come out of this babel; I am sick from eating too much of the world.*

THE YOUNG MAN. *Nay, I have only begun the feast—I am an-hungered. Look at this shop, O my father!*

A MERCHANT. *What wilt thou buy, O my brother? Silks? Kerchiefs? Girdles? Here's all the earth gives birth to.*

AN EGYPTIAN (with a little girl, to a boy selling beads.) *What manner of beads are these, O my son?*

THE BEAD-BOY. *Beads from Damascus! Beads of polished steel! Glass beads from Rhodes! Beads clear as crystal from the land of China, whiter than sea-pearls!*

THE EGYPTIAN (to his little girl.) *What shall I buy thee, O my Pigeon? These beads? Or those? Speak, O my Lotus!*

A MAN (to one of the fruit-sellers.) *Is thy fruit sweet, O my sister? (He takes up some fruit.)*

THE FRUIT-SELLER. *Pay first and taste after.*

A MAN. *Thy fruit is over-ripe.*

THE FRUIT-SELLER. *'Tis fresh as the dawn-breeze.*

THE MAN. *O my little tulip, how should I believe thee? Dost thou not belong to the universal sisterhood of woman?*

THE FRUIT-SELLER. *All women are not alike; nor are the fingers of the hand alike.*

THE SWEETMEAT-SELLER (crying.) *Sweet-ts! Sweet-ts! No better sweets in Baghdad. No better sweets in Baghdad. They are made by my cousin. He's pastry-cook at the palace.*

A BUYER. *Allah increase thee for a smooth-tongued liar!*

THE SWEETSELLER. *Taste my wares and ask my pardon!*

(*And so it goes. Cries and movement everywhere. The shop-keeper's call to the passer-by is, "What dost thou want? Dost thou lack kerchiefs, shawls?" Greetings are heard such as, "I salute thee with my salaam! Allah increase thee, O my brother! A blessed day! Allah gladden thee with good news! The Bestower increase thee ever!" Porters plough their way through the crowd calling out, "Have patience, o ye people, have patience." Compliments are heard such as, "Thou art like the moon on a fourteenth night! Thy body sways like a thirsting gazelle! Gifted by the Giver art thou! Thy beauty would make a palace dance!" And words of anger and impatience such as, "Begone and none of thine impudence! Be off! By Allah, this is not allowed! May Allah never bless thee! No friendly welcome to thee! Fie upon thee, ill-omened fellow!" The hubbub reaches its climax as a WATER-CARRIER enters, shouting loudly, "Water! Water, cool and clear!" He is stopped by two negro slaves, who buy cups of water from him. Then the WATER-CARRIER turns, as AMRU, a stout imposing merchant with a huge beard, comes down the street and approaches him. AMRU takes a cup. As he does so, ZAYD looks up from his shop in surprise and hurries out of it.)*

ZAYD. (*Surprised.*) By mine eyes, Amru !

AMRU. (*Delighted.*) By mine eyes, Zayd !

(*They embrace, one arm being thrown round the shoulder, the other round the side, placing the chin first upon the left then upon the right collar bone and repeating this several times. As they embrace the crowd gradually disperses, leaving the street comparatively empty. But there is always a sense of life in the suk, and the hum of the bazaar is heard dimly throughout the scene.*)

ZAYD. Welcome and well come and good cheer to my friend, the dearly-beloved. So thou art home from Egypt ? (*He motions him over to his shop.*)

AMRU. Yesternight in the first watch I caused my camels to kneel at my door.

ZAYD. By Allah and his Apostle, it swells my heart to hear thy voice once more ? Thou hast tarried many moons. Has thy business prospered ?

(*The little apprentice has spread out cushions : they both sit.*)

AMRU. Fortune hath blessed me indeed. And thou ? How is't with thee ?

ZAYD. Alas ! Traffic has grown dull with the new Caliph.

AMRU. So soon ? He hath been in power but seven days they tell me.

ZAYD. He is very young—scarce sixteen,—and so devout ! He was schooled in a monastery in the mountains. 'Tis said his harim is empty. Not a woman,—not as much as a wife.

AMRU. Not so much as—and seven days ! By the glories of Paradise to come ! An I were Caliph for seven days !

ZAYD. An I were Caliph for seven hours ! But they say that he is waiting to find the woman of his dream, a maid of beauty all in all. Be she of noblest blood or poorest of the poor, he hath taken oath, until Allah reveal the chosen one, he will live alone,—unwed,—unwived.

(Kettledrums are heard in the distance to the left.)

(AMRU returns to his shop at the right.)

(The crowd hurries in from all sides. Men and women all kneel, bending low. As the CALIPH enters they touch their foreheads to the ground.)

(Through the centre arch comes the Caliph's procession, turning down and disappearing through the arch right. First come SIX ARCHERS OF THE GUARD with lances. Next follow FOUR MEN with KETTLEDRUMS (like tom-toms) and a pair of TRUMPETERS: then SIX ARCHERS with scymitars drawn, walking two and two. After that, DIGNITARIES of the royal household. Some singly, others in twos. These are: the Caliph's slipper-bearer; his cloak-bearer; his cup-bearer; his ewer and basin-bearer; his bow-bearer, and his carpet-spreader. Next the two head EUNUCHS of his harim, both tall blackamoors clothed in yellow.)

(After this, at an interval of five paces, on a white mule, the CALIPH himself, robed in the black of the Abbaside dynasty. His face is very youthful, full of spiritual beauty and weary pride. On his left cheek he has a mole. By his left side walks ABU BAKR, an old, white-bearded man, clothed in green and white,

with a very large turband, holding his master's left stirrup.)

(As the CALIPH reaches the centre of the street, an old woman, KABIRAH, throws herself at his feet; the procession halts.)

KABIRAH. O King of the age—justice ! Justice to an ancient widow and a sore oppressed ! *(She holds out a petition.)*

CALIPH. *(Waving to ABU BAKR who takes the petition.)* Come thou to my Diwan this mid-afternoon. None shall suffer wrong under this my sovereignty. The Judge of Judges be my witness. 'The Peace !

(KABIRAH withdraws muttering "Heaven increase thee ever, O King.")

(The procession moves on; the people in the street remaining crouched and motionless as the CALIPH passes them.)

(A COURT DIGNITARY follows, scattering coin.)

(SIX ARCHERS, with scymitars drawn, conclude the procession.)

(Directly the CALIPH's guard is out of sight there is a wild scramble for the royal largesse. The rabble then follows the procession.)

ZAYD. *(To AMRU, shouting across to his shop.)* Didst note the mole on his cheek ? Is he not beautiful ?

AMRU. Allah bless him ! And the old man ?

ZAYD. Abu Bakr, his tutor—a far famed grammarian. He entered the city with countless camel-loads of dictionaries. 'Tis he who ruleth the ruler.

AMRU. Where's Mansur—the old Caliph's favourite ? He was wont to ride by his master's side. Hath he fallen from power ?

ZAYD. Nay, he's still Chief of the Guards of the City and Wazir of the Police. But at the Palace they

begin to whisper—(*Seeing MANSUR ; in a low voice.*)
The Peace !—Mansur !

(MANSUR appears, a tall, slim, sinister figure of about eight and twenty. His face shows traces of beauty ruined by debauchery ; his manner is that of an expert in the sensualism of cruelty ; his robes are of deep blue and steel. He is evidently nursing his rage, and strides along ominously. Behind him comes KAFUR, his sworder, a snake-like Ethiopian, by whose side hobbles a small hunchback scribe, AFIFE, who looks more like a pelican than a man.)

(As MANSUR enters, a BLIND MAN crosses his path.)

THE BLIND MAN. Blind ! Blind ! Buy a blessing from the blind !

(MANSUR annoyed at the BLIND MAN'S fumbling, strikes him down and passes on. The BLIND MAN gets up again, helped by two of the courtesans. ZAYD gives him a coin or two, and he goes on his way.)

ZAYD (to AMRU). Didst mark his rage ? He, the favourite of yesterday, to-day must walk second to the grammarian. The splitter of lives bow to the splitter of syllables. Ha ! Ha !

(HAJJ appears in the centre archway. He is still in rags. He comes down to ZAYD.)

ZAYD. (*Putting him off as he would a beggar.*)
Heaven will provide, O brother.

(HAJJ crosses to AMRU.)

AMRU. (*In the same tone as ZAYD.*) Allah will provide.

HAJJ. Nay, I am no beggar.

ZAYD AND AMRU. What art thou then ?

HAIJ. I am a religious mendicant. My vow of poverty has been accomplished in the hour. I am on my way to the hammam to re-enter daily life.

ZAYD. O father of rags, thou art strangely like to a beggar before the Carpenter's Mosque.

HAIJ. So I have been told. The sooner therefore I strip me of his likeness, the better for both of us. What hast thou in the manner of cloaks and shirts and turband-cloths? (*He clicks the purse ominously.*)

(*ZAYD and AMRU hurry forward, each bringing a cushion for HAIJ to sit on. They spread a big square of stuff before him on which they display their goods.*)

(*HAIJ sits down with great satisfaction.*)

ZAYD. All colours, O my master.

AMRU. All kinds, O my master.

HAIJ. (*With a delighted smile, pleased at the epithet.*) Master! (*He chinks his purse.*)

ZAYD. Why dost thou smile?

HAIJ. 'Tis nought! A memory! Show me thy wares.

AMRU. Thou'lt see mine too, O my lord?

HAIJ. (*Turning to AMRU, as above.*) Lord!—Thine too,—O my—my tailor. (*Pointing to some veils in AMRU's hands.*) What's this?

ZAYD. (*Spreading out a cloak eagerly.*) Thy cloak, O my master.

HAIJ. (*To ZAYD putting him off.*) A moment. (*To AMRU.*) Face veils?

AMRU. (*Spreading out a veil.*) After the fashion of Egypt. Woven air!

HAIJ. (*Taking up the veil.*) A veil! Hast thou anklets?

AMRU. Here are jewels none hath set eyes on in Baghdad. (*He opens a little casket.*)

ZAYD. (*Jealously, calling across.*) O my lord,—thy cloak.

AMRU. (*To ZAYD, annoyed.*) Trouble not my master.

HAIJ. (*Taking up the anklets and veil.*) How much?

AMRU. Seven dinars.

HAIJ. Thou art mad! (*He turns to ZAYD.*) Thy cloak!

AMRU. (*Eagerly.*) How much wilt thou offer?

HAIJ. (*Ignoring AMRU.*) Allah, this is workmanship!

AMRU. (*As above.*) Six dinars and a half.

HAIJ. (*To ZAYD.*) Who's the designer of this?

ZAYD. 'Tis I.

AMRU. (*Quickly to HAIJ, waving the scarf and anklets.*) Six.

HAIJ. (*turning to AMRU.*) Three! And 'tis more than paid.

AMRU. The anklets alone cost me four.

ZAYD. (*To HAIJ.*) Thou'lt have the cloak?

HAIJ. How much?

ZAYD. Twenty-five dinars.

HAIJ. Twenty-five! (*He turns abruptly to AMRU.*) Three dinars.

ZAYD. Twenty-four and a half!

AMRU. Four dinars and I lose. By the life of my father, I swear it.

HAIJ. Four an thou wrappest them up in one of thy kerchiefs.

AMRU. 'Tis beyond my yielding. (*He takes his veils away.*)

HAIJ. (*Turning to ZAYD.*) Hast thou veils? (*AMRU eyes HAIJ eagerly.*)

ZAYD. The best in Baghdad. Thou'lt have the cloak?

HAIJ. I'll see others first. Put it there. (*He points to the kerchief spread out before him.*) Thy veils!

AMRU. Hold! Thou shalt have thy veil and kerchief. But I swear——

HAIJ. (*Turning to AMRU.*) Swear not! (*Counts out the money.*) Four! Thou hast begun the day too

well. What shirt is this? (*He takes it up.*) And yon trousers and girdle? (*Pointing to some trousers and a girdle ZAYD'S apprentice is holding up.*)

(*The GUIDE NASIR enters at the back, sees HAJJ and watches him unobserved, with cat-like glances, leaning against ZAYD'S shop. ZAYD hands HAJJ the trousers and girdle.*)

AMRU. (*Shouting.*) First see this girdle of mine.

HAJJ. Now which of ye twain hath a turband-cloth to my heart?

ZAYD. (*Unrolling one.*) O master, 'tis I.

AMRU. (*Unrolling another.*) O master, 'tis me.

ZAYD. I!

AMRU. Me!

HAJJ. The master asked both. (*Pointing to AMRU'S cloth, squinting at ZAYD out of the corner of his eye.*) His cloth far excelleth thine.

ZAYD. (*Furious.*) His cloth excel mine? Yon meagre tracery crawling along the edge as a dying dog to a puddle,—that excel my glorious branching and bowing of pomegranates?

AMRU. Dying dog, indeed! Dying dog thyself.

ZAYD. By Allah, hold thy peace, O brother.

HAJJ. (*To ZAYD inciting him.*) How? Let him call thee dog?

ZAYD. (*Springing up.*) Called he me dog? Didst thou call me dog, O dog?

AMRU. (*Conciliating him, still on his knees.*) Enough, O Zayd. Words poison.

HAJJ. (*To AMRU, in a whisper.*) What? Kneel to a slave, dost thou?

AMRU. Yehh! Thou art right. (*Rising and facing ZAYD.*) Yes, I—I call thee dog.

ZAYD. Thou shall eat thy words. (*He crosses to AMRU.*)

AMRU. And thou thy pomegranates. (*They fall to blows.*)

(HAJJ quickly gathers the clothes he picked out, wraps the large cloth about them and hurries off by the arch, left. NASIR has watched HAJJ and follows him off. THE MERCHANTS AND APPRENTICES hurry out of the shops.)

VARIOUS MEN. Ho, Masters! Ho, masters! Help! They're fighting! They'll have their swords out. Ho, Moslems! Ho Captain! Help!

(Several of the shopmen and passers-by crowd round, chattering and screaming, trying to separate the two men. Different ones shout: "O AMRU! O Brothers! Where's the Syndic? O ZAYD! For the love of Allah! Are ye not sons of Islam both?" etc.)

(The CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH hurries in by the centre arch. The two men are separated by him.)

CAPTAIN. O Zayd! O Amru! Shame upon ye! How now? Are ye donkey-boys?

AMRU. O Captain! Heaven knoweth we were ever the best of friends.

ZAYD. Ever till this hour.

CAPTAIN. Who began it?

ZAYD. 'Twas my lord here who said—(He points to HAJJ's empty cushion; stops and stares amazed.)

Where is my lord? (He looks about bewildered.)

Yehh! Gone! Gone and the clothes with him.

AMRU. O, the bazaar devil! 'Twas he that set us on.

ZAYD. After him. Which way went he?

A MAN. This way. (He points to the arch left.)

(The crowd, headed by ZAYD, starts to run off to the left.)

ANOTHER MAN. (Pointing up to the centre arch.)

This way!

(The crowd veers and starts off to the back.)

STILL ANOTHER MAN. (*Pointing to the right.*) This way! (*They all swing to the right.*)

(NASIR re-enters from the left arch eagerly.)

NASIR. (*At the top of his voice.*) No, that way. I know the dog well. 'Tis Hajj—the beggar!

(*General hubbub as ALL run off to the left, shouting and gesticulating.*)

THE SWEETMEAT-SELLER. (*Rising and putting his tray of sweets on his head goes slowly down the street, shouting.*) Ho! Ho! Sweet—ts!

[CURTAIN]

SCENE III. *The Courtyard of a poor House.*

In the right wall a large double door leads out to the street. An arch, which supports the upper part of the house, runs parallel to the wall at the right, thus screening the court from the street. At the back, a door leads into the inner house. Two cages with a bird in each, are hanging on the wall right. The left side of the court is taken up by a wall about seven feet high, a niche in its centre containing a well with ropes, buckets and a large jar or two. Over the wall can be seen some cypresses of a garden. In the shadow of this wall, a rose tree grows in a rim of masonry. An awning is stretched across the Court. A tom-tom stands in one corner.

The full morning sun over everything.

MARSINAH, a beautiful girl of fourteen summers (*which would correspond to a girl of eighteen in the west*) is seated on some rough matting, in the

centre of the court. She is clad in the simplest fashion, like the poorest Arabian women. She is busy with some needlework on a large embroidery frame, which rests on four legs like a low table.

Near her, idly fanning away the flies, sits NARJIS, a stout, old Duenna, with a full-blown face. About them on the matting lie strands of different coloured wools.

MARSINAH. (*Looking up to the garden wall.*) The sun grows hot.

NARJIS. How's thy border? Will it be done by noon-prayer? I promised it the merchant.

MARSINAH. (*Impatiently sighing.*) I hear, O Narjis, I hear. Hast thou any yellow wool?

NARJIS. (*Turns away from Marsinah to look for it.*) Yellow? Yellow? Did I not give it thee erst-while?

MARSINAH. (*Quickly takes the yellow wool and hides it under the folds of her dress.*) 'Twas red thou gavest me.

NARJIS. By the life of thy youth, O Marsinah, 'twas yellow. (*She rises and searches.*)

MARSINAH. Look thyself. Thou seest I lack it to finish the pattern.

NARJIS. Alas! (*Sighs.*) What's to be done? What's to be done?

(She sits despondently on the rim of the well.)

MARSINAH. Run to the wool market, O good Narjis.

NARJIS. All the way to the wool market?

MARSINAH. 'Tis none so far for one so sprightly as thou, O sweet Narjis. Thou didst promise it the merchant—remember!

NARJIS. I could have laid an oath with the All-seeing there was yet another strand of yellow.

MARSINAH. (*Tucking away a tell-tale thread.*) Couldst thou in sooth?

NARJIS. Well-a-day! There's nought for me but to go. We must finish the work or the money's lost.

(*She crosses to the large double door and takes down a huge iron door key, which hangs on the wall beside the door.*)

And O Marsinah! No looking out of windows or peeping over walls.

MARSINAH. By Lady Fatimah's life of light! What dost thou suppose?

NARJIS. Think of thy father. Thou knowest how he fears for thy safety. Was not his first wife stolen? His son slaughtered? Art thou not the last of his race? Is not thine own mother in the tomb of eternity? I tell thee, should one folly on thy part reach thy father's ears, 'twere the undoing of us both.

MARSINAH. Fear nought, O dear Narjis.

(NARJIS has let herself out and locked the door outside.)

(MARSINAH rises, and listens at the door. Then she hurries to the rim of the masonry by the well, gets up on it and peers over the wall. With a little cry of delight she exclaims "Waiting! Waiting!" Then claps her left palm with her right hand twice. She listens,—then claps again. Some one answers the signal in the same manner. She draws her veil across her face instinctively and stands expectant.)

(A youth appears over the masonry. In a moment he is down and in her arms. By his mole he is seen to be the young CALIPH ABDALLAH,—but he is now dressed in the simple clothes of an artisan.)

CALIPH. O my beloved ! At last !

MARSINAH. Dost thou still love me, O my master.

CALIPH. Still ?

(He draws away her veil and kisses her between the eyes.)

All my soul lieth between thine eyes ! All my longing on thine untouched lips. Still love thee ?

MARSINAH. How can man love maid who unveileth her face as I have to thee ?

CALIPH. How can man not love ?

MARSINAH. *(Veiling herself again.)* I am ashamed at my shamelessness.

CALIPH. Sooner be thou ashamed of mine. 'Twas I that climbed the wall, broke in on thee to tear the cloud from the new moon.

(He raises the veil from her face.)

MARSINAH. I swear were to-day three days ago, and thou imploring me now, by thine eyes, I'd not betray my secrecy again.

CALIPH. What ! Is thy love grown faint so soon ?

MARSINAH. Allah help me, strong so soon. I am become a thousand times more watchful, more jealous of myself, and all because of thee. Alas ! How must honour like thine judge of frailty like mine ?

CALIPH *(passionately.)* Mine honour judges as it judged the first moment of seeing thee : that thou art my love, that I hold thy little hands in mine, and that thou shalt be my wife—none other before thee.

(Drawing her towards him.)

MARSINAH. *(Sinking at his feet.)* O my loved one ; this is a dream of thine. Think of thy parents. What will they say ? What wilt thou tell them ?

CALIPH. *(He sits by her on the ground.)* What ? That I looked out from my father's pavilion one blessed evening and saw thee feeding thy little birds—

at yon window. That I gazed on thy white wrists long—long. What more need I say. (*He is about to kiss her wrists.*)

MARSINAH. (*Withdrawing them playfully.*) My wrists! Hath my face no say in thy loving?

CALIPH. Thy face! The Forgiver forgive thee. Since I beheld its light, my nights are sleepless; my days burning sands. This stolen moment alone my shade, thy hair my breeze, thy voice my fountain.

MARSINAH. (*Drawing away.*) O my love, leave me; forget me utterly. Thy mother will never choose me thy bride. Is thy father not far, far above my father? Did'st thou not say he was the Caliph's gardener?

CALIPH. Is the Caliph's gardener such a mighty man?

MARSINAH. Narjis says he is.

CALIPH. (*Secretly annoyed.*) Narjis—the old woman?

MARSINAH. Yea, and she says more. I asked her in a light way—O very lightly—had she e'er heard spoken of the gardener's son. And she—the fool—she swears he never had a son; that his only wife is dead these many years; that the garden next door hath been leased by a grammarian, the new Caliph's tutor; that once even the Caliph himself came to walk there in the cool of the day.

CALIPH. (*Curtly.*) Narjis is an old gossip. She knows not what she chatters.

MARSINAH. So I told her. But she said, "On with thy work, O thou daughter of ignorance." Then I began to laugh, thinking of thee, and flung out a line of a song, till her forehead swelled with rage and she beat me.

CALIPH. (*Furiously.*) She beat thee?

MARSINAH. O 'tis naught. She does so often.

CALIPH. The sister of Satan!

MARSINAH. What would'st thou! She's not my mother.

CALIPH. (*Tenderly.*) O my Marsinah! Has this been thy life? Is thy mother gone long?

MARSINAH. Three years 'tis now since she entered into the mercy of Allah! Alas! Those were different days. What I did for my mother I did in delight. What I learnt from her, I learnt with a dancing heart. All her songs, the plucking of the lute she taught me—as 'twere so much laughter. In her hour, ere my father took her to wife, she had been the slave of a rich merchant. The cunningest teachers in Baghdad had taught her. When the merchant gave her her freedom, she was besought to sing at all the rarest feasts. Then Allah took her voice and evil nights fell upon her. Thus my father found her, outcast and starving. Such was my mother.

(*A short silence.*)

CALIPH. Thou did'st not tell me that thou could'st play, that thou could'st sing! What fresh perfection do I find in thee every moment!

MARSINAH. 'Tis all my mother in me.

CALIPH. 'Tis all thyself in thee. Blessed be He that fashioned thee in thy splendour of beauty. Thy face is fairer than health; thine eyes are the eyes of a gazelle; thy lips a cluster of coral; like a silver column is thy neck: and thy breasts, pomegranates in their glory. O, my beloved, when will come the hour that I shall hold thee close to my heart, while the night hangeth her silver lamp over our silence.

MARSINAH. (*In a whisper.*) When Allah willeth—and Allah will it soon.

(*Their lips meet in a kiss.*)

CALIPH. (*Rises to his knees with sudden passion.*) It shall be this night.

MARSINAH. O, sweet my lord, I have told thee before, it cannot be. Not at night. Narjis is ever

here, and ofttimes my father. My only freedom is a morn like to-day's.

CALIPH. (*Drawing close to her.*) Thou shalt have other freedom undreamt of by thee.

MARSINAH. What wilt thou do?

CALIPH. Can'st thou trust me?

MARSINAH. With all my soul, an thou put not thy life in danger.

CALIPH. Dost thou love me so?

MARSINAH. (*Hanging her head.*) Sooner would I lose thee for ever.

CALIPH. (*After a pause, with a smile she does not observe.*) Fear naught.

MARSINAH. What is't? Nothing to harm thee?

CALIPH. (*Cheek to cheek.*) Thou'lt see! When the evening prayer hath locked the door of the day, then will I come to open the eyes of thy heart.

This joy must yield to deeper joy its power;
As bud still rends its veil, to blush as flower.

MARSINAH. (*Improvising.*)

Ah me! How oft the foolish petal's haste
Is scattered to the skies by fatal shower.

CALIPH. (*Turning surprised—joyously.*) Yehh!
Can'st cap verses too? By Allah! What is this
Wonder of wonders, that the Giver of all things
good——

MARSINAH. (*Rises, interrupting him.*) Awah!

CALIPH. Nothing.

MARSINAH. It is. Fly, O my beloved.

CALIPH. (*Rises.*) How can I leave my soul behind
and not die? (*He goes up to the rim of the well.*)

MARSINAH. Go, I implore thee! By all that's holy!
Here! (*She plucks a rose from the bush, kisses it,
and hands it to him.*) Go!

(*The CALIPH presses the rose to his lips, then
slips it into his breast and climbs over the wall.*)

CALIPH. (*From the top of the wall.*) After set of sun! (*He disappears over the wall.*)

NARJIS. (*Outside.*) Marsinah! Marsinah!

(MARSINAH *hurries to her work, sits and stitches furiously.*)

NARJIS. (*entering the courtyard*). A gift of good news, O my roe. Thy father is coming.

MARSINAH. My father? Never yet came he home during the day.

NARJIS. Never yet. But to-day he cometh. I saw him leaving the hammam-bath, unlike himself—in robes of splendour, his locks combed, his beard trimmed, and (*imitating him*) striding along as proud and calm as a camel! I hasted ahead through the alleys. Had he found thee alone—— (*There is a knock on the door.*) By the Prophet! None too soon. (*Calling out.*) I come! I come! (*Goes to the door and calls through it.*) Who art thou? What seekest thou? (*She winks at MARSINAH and feigns surprise.*) Allah! 'tis my master. O Marsinah! Thy father, as I am awake! (*She unlocks the door.*)

(MARSINAH *has risen; drawing her veil about the back of her head.*)

(HAJJ *enters as described, wearing all his stolen robes, his beard neatly trimmed, his whole being refreshed by the bath. His manner is far more self-assured. He carries his little bundle of presents for his daughter, which he flings to the ground.*)

MARSINAH. Salam, O my father.

NARJIS. Salam, O my master.

HAJJ. Salam.

(*All sit, HAJJ between the two women.*)

MARSINAH. Thou smellest so sweet; is it musk?

HAJJ. I have lain in the hammam all morning.

MARSINAH. May thy bath profit thee, O my father.
What blessed coming is thine?

HAJJ. Thou mayst indeed call it blessed. For verily the Dispeller of woe hath turned the murk of my night into a day of light and delight. What say ye to this. (*He takes out his purse.*) Gold! Gold! Gold! What a sound it is! It chinks straight into the blood and sets the heart a-beating, so the temples throb and reason flies from the head. Dost thou mark it, O Marsinah. O Narjis, dost thou?

MARSINAH. (*Clapping her hands.*) Yehh!

NARJIS. (*Suspicious.*) Whence hadst thou this?

HAJJ. Whence? (*His brow clouds.*) Whence? From a fool in his folly! An accursed for whom it shall weave the rope round his neck. But that's for later. (*Chinking the purse.*) This for now. (*He slips the purse in his breast.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! O eyes of me! Ye should have beheld them in the hammam—the bath-keeper and his slaveboys. How they bowed before me—one and all. “O my master” here, and “O my lord” there. And such rinsings, and rubbings, and clappings, till my limbs rang aloud with smoothness! Then they laid me adown on silken sheets, the while censers fumed me sweetly from head to heel. And the bath-keeper knelt at my feet, and sung to the tom-tom a song. (*He sings, imitating the playing of a tom-tom with his hands.*)

A bowl of wine! Two bowls of wine!

And three more bowls and that makes nine!

(*He draws out the purse and flings it in the air with a shout, catching it again.*)

MARSINAH. (*Clapping her hands gleefully and rising to her knees.*) O my father! Thou art magnificent!

HAJJ. (*Delighted.*) Magnificent—am I?

MARSINAH. Yea! Even as a prince in one of the tales thou tellest.

HAJJ. A Prince! (*He strokes his moustachios.*) A King?

MARSINAH. A King, in truth, a King! Is he not, O Narjis?

NARJIS. (*Ironically.*) A King, in very sooth.

MARSINAH. Never beheld I thee thus. Never till this hour. White as milk is this day of mine.

HAJJ. It shall be whiter still, O my dainty. Give me the bundle, O Narjis. Thou shalt bless the day indeed, O my rose. (*Opening the bundle.*) Ah! Now thine eyes glisten. Now!

MARSINAH. Thou didst remember me?

HAJJ. Remember thee? What doth thy soul most desire in this world? Speak.

MARSINAH. Most? (*She glances unconsciously up over the garden wall, but looks down again quickly.*)

HAJJ. Ah, now thou blushest. What is it?

MARSINAH. (*Confused.*) I—know—not.

HAJJ. (*Imitating.*) "I know not." O Narjis, was ever maid such maid. She knows not. By Allah, thou hast guarded her well. She is as simple as the hour she was born. "I know not." (*He fondles Marsinah's cheek.*)

MARSINAH. (*Hanging her head.*) What should I know?

(HAJJ and NARJIS look at each other smiling knowingly.)

HAJJ. Thou shouldest know that thy father loves thee! (*He kisses her on both eyes.*) And that he has brought thee these. (*He produces the anklets from the bundle.*)

MARSINAH. Anklets! (*She flings off her slippers laughing gleefully and puts on the anklets.*) O Narjis! O Narjis! At last! Now! What girl in our street can laugh at me now? (*Rises and circles about the*

two.) Look, O Narjis, look! Jamilah, or Mubarakah, or any of them. O my master, I kiss thy feet. (*She kneels before HAJJ and bows down.*)

HAJJ. (*Laying his hand on her head.*) Thou art content?

MARSINAH. (*Blissfully.*) Content? Content?

HAJJ. Then what sayst thou to a veil? (*He unfolds the veil.*)

MARSINAH. (*Springs up, then bashfully—overcome.*) For me—too? (*HAJJ hands it to her smilingly.*) (*In rapture, holding it up; unconsciously looking up to the garden wall.*) Oh! would I had had it this morn!

HAJJ. This morn! What dost thou mean?

MARSINAH. (*Realising her self-betrayal.*) I mean—I know not. My heart is so happy. La Yayhá! Do I fill thine eyes, O my father? (*She drapes the veil about her.*)

HAJJ. (*Smiling proudly.*) Fill mine eyes! Go! Fetch thy lute! We will have music. This day shall be a day of rejoicing.

MARSINAH. (*Going.*) I hear and I obey. (*She hurries off across the courtyard into the house.*)

HAJJ. (*Looking after her.*) By Allah! How she glides swimmingly as she were a lily floating down the Tigris. Blessed indeed is he that taketh her to wife.

NARJIS. Aye, and she's ripe to wed, too.

HAJJ. Fourteen! The pick of years! I must seek her a husband.

NARJIS. (*Huddles up to him.*) What sayst thou to the basket-weaver's son at the corner?

HAJJ. The basket-weaver's son? O thou hag! (*Slaps her cheek with the back of his hand.*) Why not a bean-seller? (*Slap.*) Or a camel-boy? (*Slap.*) Yea, or best and rarest, some blear-eyed mangy beggar? (*Slap.*)

(MARSINAH *appears with a lute.*)

HAIJ. (*To NARJIS.*) Behold her now! I swear the very movement of her limbs maketh melody.

MARSINAH. What shall I sing thee, O my father? (*She stands tuning her instrument.*)

HAIJ. How many modes canst thou play in?

MARSINAH. One-and-twenty.

HAIJ. One-and-twenty. (*To NARJIS.*) Are one-and-twenty modes for the basket-weaver's son? (*He slaps NARJIS again.* *To MARSINAH.*) And sing how many?

MARSINAH. The like number.

HAIJ. And dance? How many steps did thy mother teach thee?

MARSINAH. Far beyond counting.

HAIJ. (*To NARJIS.*) Thou hearest! Are they, the countless, for the basket-weaver's son? (*A final slap.*) I tell thee, Marsinah is rare as a houri in Paradise. Wouldst thou know what secret the future hideth for Marsinah?

NARJIS. (*Rubbing her poor cheek.*) What secret, O master?

HAIJ. Sit thee down here, O my flower. And here thou, O my cactus. Mark me close, ye both.

(MARSINAH *sits on the ground by HAIJ.*)

HAIJ. (*Drawing the purse from his breast.*) This money in my bosom will I take and buy merchandise withal. (*Tossing the purse from hand to hand; his voice in lyrical exaltation.*) And I will trade and sell; and buy and trade; till it is doubled and trebled a hundred times hundredfold. Then shall I turn from toil and trouble, to clothe my Marsinah in a rope of pearls serene; with the crown of a queen on her forehead clear; two jewels of shine and sheen, pending o'er each ear,—here and there; on her breast will I set a ruby amulet of flash and fret; and stuffed within a priceless piece of ambergris.

MARSINAH. (*In wonder.*) O my father!

HAIJ. And the name of thy beauty shall be blown abroad, beyond Arabia, through Sind, into China, even as far as the islands of Wak. And suitors shall venture across deserts and sea, by caravel and camel, and fall on their knee in suppliance for thee.

MARSINAH. Yehh!

HAIJ. But I—thy sire, (*leaning on NARJIS lazily as though she were a feather bed.*)—shall lie back on pillows of ostrich plumes, propping mine elbow thus, nor turning to right nor to left. And there shall be wailings and gnashings of teeth amongst thy lovers; the while thou, behind many lintels, in a court of marble with a roof of molten gold, dancest merrily, airily, to the sound of smitten strings.

MARSINAH. (*Laughing joyfully and clapping her hands.*)
Ya ha! Ya ha!

HAIJ. (*Triumphantly.*) Ha! Ha! (*Eagerly.*) Dance now, O dawn-breeze, now! O Narjis, pluck a tune with thy talons. (*Hands her the lute.*) Up, O Marsinah, up! My tom-tom, O Narjis! My tom-tom!

(MARSINAH *springs up. She begins to dance slowly, then faster and faster. NARJIS, after handing HAIJ his tom-tom, plays and occasionally sings as well.*)

HAIJ. (*Beating the tom-tom, shrilly.*) Yehh! Allah! La Yayhá! La Yayhá! So shalt thou dance! So! And the kings of the earth shall send their sons! La Yayhá! By thy youth, thou art as a branch swaying! La Yayhá! But I shall laugh them to scorn, all and one—"Ye swine," shall I say—"Ye——"

(*There is a knock at the door.*)

(MARSINAH *stops; so does NARJIS.*)

HAIJ. Nought. Neighbours. On! (*They begin again.*)

HAIJ. "Ye swine—who are ye to——"

(Another knock.)

A VOICE. *(Outside.)* Open in the name of justice.

HAIJ. *(Instinctively looks at his garments.)* Wah!
Go indoors, O my delight, go! *(He throws the bundle to MARSINAH.)*

(MARSINAH, taking the bundle, goes into the house wondering.)

HAIJ. *(To NARJIS,)* Open! Open! Open!
(NARJIS opens the house door.)

(HAIJ sits expectant, tracing figures in the sand with his finger-tips.)

(The CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH enters—behind him come ZAYD and AMRU and FOUR ARCHERS. THE ARCHERS fling open the double doors to the street and guard them. NASIR enters as well.)

CAPTAIN. Is this the house of Hajj, the beggar?

HAIJ. What would ye?

ZAYD. I knew 'twas he! Seize the dog!

HAIJ. Seize me? *(He rises abruptly.)*

ZAYD. Those are the very garments.

CAPTAIN. Thou must come before the Wazir Mansur.

HAIJ. *(Terrified at the name.)* Mansur? I paid in part—I meant to pay in full.

AMRU. Thou liest, O split of tongue.

HAIJ. Lie? I? *(He goes for AMRU.)*

(Two ARCHERS secure HAIJ between them.)

CAPTAIN. No words! Off with him.

(THE ARCHERS march HAIJ to the door.)

NASIR. *(Darting forward and grinning into HAIJ's face.)* Ha! Ha!

HAIJ. *(Stopping as he sees NASIR.)* Oh! Thou!

NASIR. (*Mockingly imitating HAJJ's voice.*) I saw no purse.

HAJJ. (*Spitting in NASIR's face.*) Thou filth !
Thou son of filth.

(*He is led off, the other men following.*)

NARJIS. (*Wringing her hands.*) Allah ! Allah !
Allah !

[CURTAIN]

SCENE IV. *A Hall in the Wazir Mansur's Mansion.*

The room is a large oblong one, with a colonnade running along the back, looking out on a colonnaded courtyard beyond. A large double door to the left leads to the entrance hall. Opposite it, in the right wall, a niche with a diwan, raised a step or two. The tiles and carvings are of the richest.

MANSUR is seated on the diwan, before him a chess-board.

AFIFE is crouching to the right on the steps, his partner in the game.

KAFUR stands behind them watching.

MANSUR is in a sullen humour, his mind not on the game.

AFIFE. (*Making a move, in a high squeaky voice.*)
Move, O master.

MANSUR. (*Moving a chess-man.*) Now match me this move, O thou bundle of misery.

AFIFE. Match it? (*He moves.*) Thy turn, O my master.

MANSUR. (*Moving again.*) So !

AFIFE. Check !

MANSUR. Check? Now cursed be Satan the Stoned! What Ifrit is at thine elbow? This is the third game thou dost beat me.

AFIFE. Thy thoughts wander, O my Lord.

MANSUR. Dost thou wonder they wander, o thou misbegotten lump of dough?—Wander? They gallop, they fly! Even though I myself must crawl at other men's heels these days.

KAFUR. (*To MANSUR.*) There's yet one more move for thee.

MANSUR. (*Studying the board.*) One more?

KAFUR. So! (*He sweeps the chessboard clear with his sword.*)

(*The door opens and an ATTENDANT enters.*)

ATTENDANT. A Chamberlain from the Caliph, O my lord.

MANSUR. Admit him.

(*The ATTENDANT ushers in the CHAMBERLAIN from the CALIPH who enters with a sealed scroll. He comes up to MANSUR and bows.*)

CHAMBERLAIN. From the Commander of the Faithful to his Wazir Mansur.

(*KAFUR turns and takes the letter from the CHAMBERLAIN and hands it to MANSUR. MANSUR rises and takes the letter, touches the top of his head with it, then breaks the seals and scans the contents. His lips contract. After a moment's pause he says to the CHAMBERLAIN.*)

MANSUR. Harkening and obedience to the Prince of True Believers.

(*The CHAMBERLAIN bows and retires as he came.*)

MANSUR. (*Springing up with great rage.*) Hear! Hear! (*Reading from right to left.*) "In the name

of Allah, the Compassionating the Compassionate. From Abdallah, Caliph and King of Mankind to his Wazir of Police. But after. We find all the moneys of our various departments of state, complete and in account, saving those under thy control. Report thou to us accordingly at our diwan this day. Though mine uncle the King be dead, justice and order have not died with him." (*He tears the letter to bits, stuffs strips into his mouth, chews them and spits them out again.*) Wah! Now Allah damn the grammarian for this! This is *his* handiwork, big-turban'd, bean-fed son of a sow! So I'm to end through *him*? I who sat in his seat, hard by the side of the throne. By all devils that kneel round hell, I swear this shall never be—do ye hear me?—no, never! (*He strikes at AFIFE in his rage.*)

KAFUR. What wilt thou do, O my lord?

MANSUR. I would I had him between my feet to rip the tongue from his teeth.

AFIFE. A hundred grammatical tongues will not bring back one danik of the moneys thou hast squandered.

MANSUR. Justice and order! (*He spits out a piece of the letter.*) Pah! Show me the Wazir of Police who hath crushed with a heavier hand, whose sword made the execution ground as slippery. Recall ye not the merry summer's night when with mine own hand, in ten waves of the scymitar, I carved my old jester into as many pieces?

AFIFE. The old jester! Ha! Ha! 'Twas his last quirk!

KAFUR. How we laughed!

(*THEY all laugh.*)

MANSUR. Alas for the glorious drunken nights of passion and power. The feasts of beauty and blood! Awah, awah, awah!

(THEY all sigh.)

AFIFE. What's to be done?

KAFUR. Were Prince Omar Caliph, never wouldst thou have lost thy seat of honour.

AFIFE. Higher titles would have been thine. He loves thee as a brother.

KAFUR. He would have created thee Grand Wazir.

AFIFE. Yea, Grand Wazir of all the kingdom!

MANSUR. Were! Would! Had! The Caliph's the Is! His letter the thing alive! The spent moneys must be accounted for. 'Tis my death. Awah! Awah!

KAFUR. The guards are yet under thy orders.

MANSUR. For the moment. But to-night——

AFIFE. Use to-day.

KAFUR. (*Pointing to the chessboard.*) One move—and the game is thine.

MANSUR. (*Realising KAFUR's intention.*) Yehh! Kill the Caliph? (*He rises in thought.*)

(KAFUR and AFIFE nod and follow him, standing on either side of him.)

KAFUR. 'Tis he——

AFIFE. Or thou.

MANSUR. (*Looking from AFIFE to KAFUR.*) Yehh! But how? When? Who? (*Turning to AFIFE.*) Thou?

AFIFE. (*Groveling at MANSUR's feet.*) Alas! I lack the strength.

MANSUR. (*Turning to KAFUR.*) Thou?

KAFUR. (*Falling on his knees.*) Am I not known by every servant in the palace?

MANSUR. Then where shall I find him? This fellow strong enough, unknown enough, to stab and stab to the soul?

KAFUR. Fear not. Fate hath written the deed in the lines of someone's forehead. And when the hour comes he will be ready.

MANSUR. Yehh !

(The door opens and the ATTENDANT enters and bows. Outside voices can be heard.)

MANSUR. What noise is that ?

ATTENDANT. Some merchants in the hall, O my lord. They have caught a thief and come for justice.

MANSUR. Justice—do they? Justice! By Allah! I'll dispense them justice. Have them enter. *(He goes back to the diwan and sits.)*

(KAFUR and AFIFE take their wonted positions by his side.)

(The two shopkeepers, AMRU and ZAYD, enter, after them NASIR, the CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH and FOUR ARCHERS. A crowd of loiterers (six or eight) follow, who kneel or stand in the background. AMRU and ZAYD approach and kneel. Two NEGRO EUNUCHS enter and stand at the back.)

AMRU. O Wazir of the Age, we come for protection against the roguery of mankind.

ZAYD. O eye of uprightness! Let thy light shed judgment.

MANSUR. Speak your grievance.

AMRU. There came a man to my shop——

ZAYD. And mine——

AMRU. And he fanned a quarrel 'twixt me and my fondest friend.

ZAYD. And meantime off he stole with garments of both of us.

MANSUR. Where's the thief?

(HAJJ is brought through the door by Two ARCHERS and prostrates himself before MANSUR, the ARCHERS retiring.)

HAJJ. *(With great saintliness, on his knees.)* O Wazir of wazirs, O Wisdom of wisdom, O Clemency of

clemencies! I seek refuge in thy sanctity from these my foul-mouthed defamers. A thief—I? Allah forbend. I am a man of religion and peace. They fell to fisticuffs and curses before me, these two,—till mine ears were stung with their ungodliness and mine eyes wounded. So I laid my moneys on the carpet of the shop and went my silent ways.

ZAYD AND AMRU. (*Together.*) Liar!

AMRU. We'd not so much as fixed on a price.

HAJJ. Wilt thou swear I paid thee no earnest money?

AMRU. A miserable dinar or two to blind me.

HAJJ. Blind thee? What cause had I to blind thee?

ZAYD. Thou art a well-known beggar.

HAJJ. A beggar? Showed I thee not a swollen purse?

ZAYD. A stolen purse—thou meanest.

HAJJ. He lies, O my lord. 'Twas given me in charity.

MANSUR. Given thee? By whom?

HAJJ. By one Jawan—a highwayman.

MANSUR. A highwayman do charity? Now Allah pardon thee. Tell the truth.

HAJJ. May doomsday break if I lie.

MANSUR. How? A highwayman here in Baghdad? An exile with a price on his neck? Thou art mad.

HAJJ. By mine honesty! There stands his guide Nasir. Ask him.

MANSUR. (*To NASIR.*) O thou! Is this so?

NASIR. (*Coming forward and kneeling between HAJJ and the merchants.*) 'Tis true such an one lodges at my Khan, O my lord. But he is come to the city in repentance, to pray at the tombs of saints.

MANSUR. (*Furious.*) Saints and repentance! His coming spits at the law! (*To the CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH.*) Go with yon fellow. Find the highwayman. Take him to the royal diwan this mid-after-

noon. The Caliph shall note how I uphold justice and order.

(*The CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH moves to the door with TWO ARCHERS.*)

HAIJ. (*Interrupting.*) O my lord, a word! (*To NASIR.*) Tell the Lord Wazir, thou sawest the Sheikh throw me a purse.

NASIR. (*Copying HAIJ's manner in the first scene.*) I?—I saw no purse.

HAIJ. (*Producing the purse; pleading to him.*) Nasir! Here it is.

NASIR. I saw no purse.

MANSUR. 'Tis well. Off!

(*NASIR goes with the CAPTAIN and ARCHERS.*)

MANSUR. (*To HAIJ.*) As for thee—Give me the purse!

HAIJ. Awah! (*He hands the purse to KAFUR, who hands it to MANSUR.*)

MANSUR. (*Pocketing the purse in his sleeve.*) Thou art a liar and a thief. (*To KAFUR.*) The sword and the cauldron of oil. (*KAFUR bows and motions to the NEGROES who go off into the courtyard.*)

MANSUR. Thy right hand is forfeit to the merchants.

HAIJ. (*Looking at his hand.*) My hand?

MANSUR. (*To the shopkeepers, smilingly.*) Two fingers to each. I pray you quarrel not over the thumb. (*AMRU and ZAYD smile politely in response.*)

HAIJ. My hand! My hand! Thou'lt cut off my hand?

MANSUR. Says not Allah in His Holy Koran: "If a man steal, cut off his hand"?

HAIJ. Alas, O poor hand! Thou couldst have served the Wazir of Wazirs, a courtier to his whims, a slave to his desires. (*The Two EUNUCHS re-enter from the court-yard bearing a boiling cauldron.*)

MANSUR. Now by the dog, thy father, of what service to me were a rogue's hand like thine?

(The EUNUCHS *place the boiling cauldron under HAJJ's wrist.*)

HAIJ. What service? There's not a stronger—a prompter—a bolder in Baghdad! Ready to plunder and pillage, to slash and stab, at thy least command.

MANSUR. (*Starting at the word "stab".*) Stab?

KAFUR. (*To HAJJ.*) Cease thy talk, bare thy wrist. (*He unsheathes the sword.*)

HAIJ. (*Turns and sees the sword, then says in a resigned voice.*) There is no majesty nor might save in Allah! The Causer of Causes! The Ordainer of Fate and Fortune!

KAFUR. (*About to raise the sword.*) Art thou prepared?

HAIJ. Even as the Fox for the Wolf. Strike!

(KAFUR *raises the sword.*)

MANSUR. Hold!—The Fox and the Wolf?—What story is that?

HAIJ. O Wazir of the Age, 'twere too long to recount —(*looking round slyly.*) with yon sword in the air.

MANSUR. Then shall it first sever thy wrist.

HAIJ. (*With an eloquent gesture.*) Who can tell a tale without his two hands?

MANSUR. Knowest thou many histories?

HAIJ. Ask the beggars of my quarter. The teller of night-tales they call me—one and all.

MANSUR. Away with the cauldron! (*To KAFUR.*) Hither with the sword.

(KAFUR *hands MANSUR the sword; the EUNUCHS take the cauldron into the courtyard.*)

MANSUR. What is thy name?

HAIJ. (*Creeps nearer, on his knees.*) Hajj, O my lord.

MANSUR. Thou shalt serve me, O Hajj. Thy wit shall shorten the weary watches of my sleeplessness. Take this sword, the badge of thy new dignity. (*He offers him the sword.*)

HAIJ. O fountain of grace ! My hand blesses thee for its salvation, my lowly self for its elevation. *(He takes the sword and raises it to his forehead.)* I am thy mameluke, thy chattel. *(He touches the ground with his head.)*

MANSUR. Rise ! Mansur's servants do not kneel.

HAIJ. *(Rising proudly.)* Is it thy pleasure that my first act should be an act of clemency ?

MANSUR. Do as thou wilt.

HAIJ. *(Turning ferociously on the shopkeepers.)* Then down, O ye calamities ! Down, I say, and cry my mercy for lying as ye did, ye false-of-faces !

(The SHOPKEEPERS sink down in terror. HAIJ approaches them flourishing his sword before them.)

HAIJ. Confess ye lied ! Confess ye lied !

AMRU and ZAYD. *(Scarcely audible.)* We lied ! We lied !

HAIJ. Louder, by your garlic breaths, louder !

AMRU and ZAYD. We lied ! Pardon ! Pardon !

HAIJ. Pardon ?—So ye send not my lord rich gifts of atonement none shall answer for your lives. Up ! Turn your faces and show the breadth of your shoulder.

(The SHOPKEEPERS rise and hurry out by the door, more dead than alive. HAIJ prods their backs with his sword as they vanish.)

HAIJ. *(Turning to MANSUR with a flourish.)* Is it well, O my master ?

MANSUR. 'Tis a beginning. Go now ! Get thee to thy new quarters. *(To the ATTENDANT.)* Ho, Fazil ! See Hajj be lodged and robed fittingly. Garb him in the Persian garments of our jester deceased. Alas, poor fellow ! He died most sudden of a summer evening. *(With a reassuring smile.)* Thou shalt be his successor.

HAJJ. I am a tree thy bounty hath planted. May the fruit of my endeavour be to thy taste ever. (*He bows.*)

MANSUR. Thou shalt give us a smack of thy quality after the mid-day meal. Go! Whoso loveth me let him show honour to Hajj! (*He waves his handkerchief in sign of dismissal.*)

HAJJ. (*Turns and with a heroic gesture motions the curious aside.*) Room for the Wazir's Jester, O ye dogs!

(*The CROWD falls back before him.*)

(*The ATTENDANT leads the way to the left.*)

(*HAJJ struts out conducted by the ATTENDANT.*)

MANSUR. (*To KAFUR and AFIFE.*) Think ye I've pardoned this mountebank to listen to foolish fables? (*With great emphasis.*) He is the man.

KAFUR. What man?

MANSUR. The man to kill the Caliph.

(*Through the colonnade at the back HAJJ is seen to enter the courtyard from the left and cross over to the right, preceded by the ATTENDANT, MANSUR'S SERVANTS and TWO EUNUCHS, bending low, the crowd following. HAJJ turns to the hall and seeing MANSUR, bows again to him. MANSUR acknowledges his bow with a grim smile. HAJJ, delighted, turns, twirling his moustachios and with enormous swagger moves to the colonnade, right, the ATTENDANT cringing to the new favourite.*)

[CURTAIN]

End of Act I

ACT II

NOON

The MAN enters from his house, seats himself and sings :

Lo ! Now the blazing banner of the sun
In noonday sky its victory hath won ;
And even as on mighty battle plain
So lieth, stretched and stricken, everyone.

The WOMAN enters from her house, seats herself and sings :

Lo ! Now in the harim I seek in vain
The shadowed cool of midnight to regain ;
Yet though I burn, 'tis not the heaven's eye
That dooms my senses to eternal pain !

The MAN

Wah ! That some wondrous wizard passing by
Would charm to silence this my misery.

The WOMAN

Wah ! Might some mystic spell invade me so
That all my yearning would for ever die !

BOTH

O Thou, Bestower of all things, bestow
This benediction on Thy servants low.

The SORCERER enters and first reveals the MAN to the WOMAN, and the WOMAN to the MAN. When he has retired they rise and sing :

At last thou openest the future's wall,
Revealing my desire's inmost call,
O Fate, thou greatest sorcerer of all !

Then they draw together for an instant. But the hour is not yet ripe. So they turn and enter their respective houses. They have seen each other.

ACT II

AFTERNOON

SCENE I. *The Hall in the Wazir Mansur's Mansion.*

The same scene as the last, but richly embroidered curtains have now been drawn between the columns to keep out the glare of the afternoon sun. This gives the room a more intimate feeling. Two large cushions have been placed on the floor and between them a low wine-table with beakers of wine, drinking bowls, fruits, sweetmeats, and a bunch of aromatic herbs.

MANSUR is reclining on one cushion. AFIFE and KAFUR are on the diwan. TWO SLAVES stand ready to replenish the cups.

On the cushion to the left is seated HAJJ, in a brilliant fantastic Persian robe and a gorgeous turband. He sits up very erect, his eyes sparkling, his arms outstretched—evidently at the climax of his story.

HAJJ. "Thereupon, O hearer, the fox saw his foe, the wolf, was slain; and henceforth he abode alone in the vineyard, secure to the hour of his death." But Allah is all-knowing!

MANSUR. In sooth, a pleasing tale!

(He drains his cup and holds it out to the SLAVE, who fills it up again.)

KAFUR. Good! Good!

AFIFE. *(Clapping his hands.)* More! More! More!

MANSUR. *(Signing to the slave behind HAJJ.)* Nay, first another cup——

HAIJ. (*Putting his hand over his cup.*) O my Lord, pardon me. I am not wont to drink wine.

MANSUR. Tush! 'Tis nothing. Thin, red morning tippie. This night will we robe us in robes of gold and flame-colour and fall to quaffing in earnest; sweet Greek vintage that breeds gladness even to madness. (*He holds out the cup, which the SLAVE fills. Then MANSUR passes it to HAIJ.*) May I never be afflicted with thy loss.

(*HAIJ, bowing to MANSUR, accepts the cup and kisses it.*)

HAIJ. The slave to thy wishes revealed or concealed. (*He drains it and returns it to MANSUR.*)

MANSUR. (*Pointedly.*) So thou sayest and hast said.

HAIJ. Put me to the test, O my master. What tale dost thou desire?

MANSUR. What tale? (*Confidentially to HAIJ.*) Harkee, O Hajj. Thou hast wasted thy years. Thou canst turn the ear inside out by thy talk. Long ago thy wit should have won thee a wazirdom.

HAIJ. I? Wazir?

MANSUR. Yehh! Thou art marked for it by fate. Is this not so, O Kafur?

KAFUR. Thou hast said it.

MANSUR. (*To HAIJ.*) Thou seest? There's no escaping honours, O Hajj the Wazir! O the Wazir Hajj!

HAIJ. (*Stroking his moustachios.*) The Wazir Hajj! O my lord, what stair will lead me to so high a minaret?

MANSUR. What stair?

(*The ATTENDANT enters by the door.*)

ATTENDANT. 'Tis the hour of the diwan, O my lord.

MANSUR. The diwan! 'Tis well. (*Rises.*) (*The ATTENDANT leaves.*) I go to robe myself. Await

me but a handful of moments, O my friend. When I return I shall open a gate undreamt of by thy dearest dream. Till then, Allah increase thee, O Wazir to be.

(MANSUR goes off followed by KAFUR, AFIFE, and the TWO SLAVES.)

HAJJ. Wazir! Wazir! Another cup! A cup to thee, O Wazir Hajj, thou friend of the great, thou of the great thyself. (*He drinks another cup and struts across the room.*) Wazir! (*He approaches the diwan.*) Yehh! Why not? (*He seats himself on the diwan.*) Even such a seat was destined my limbs from eternity! (*With a chuckle.*) The Wazir Hajj!

(MISKAH, a slave-girl, enters through the curtains at the back. She is, of course, veiled. She looks about cautiously, then glides to HAJJ's side, and throws herself at his feet.)

MISKAH. O my master, my mistress bids me come kiss the dust of thy slippers.

HAJJ. Yehh! Who may be the mistress of so fair a messenger?

MISKAH. Hush! If we be heard 'tis death.

HAJJ. Speak low then. What is it?

MISKAH. 'Tis sooner told than mended. At noon-tide, lying within the lattice of the harim, my lady saw thee cross the courtyard—the servants bowing to earth before thy valiant stride.

HAJJ. (*Delighted.*) Valiant stride! (*He strokes his moustachios.*) Yehh! Did she, forsooth?

MISKAH. O noble stranger, who art thou? Whence comest thou? What is the measure of thy staying? Such and more would my mistress know. For from noon till now is all her being become one yearning question.

HAJJ. And all my being from now to eternity one

burning reply. So haste ! Bring us together that we may spell a sweet completeness.

MISKAH. Follow me, then. But by the life of thy head mark thy path. For we must step over the sleeping door-keeper of the harim. I have plied him with drugs. Three blessed hours will he lie thus in stupor—no longer. After me !

HAJJ. Hold ! I cannot leave. Any moment the Wazir may return. Might not thy mistress favour me with her coming ?

MISKAH. Hither ?

HAJJ. (*Pointing to the door.*) Thou couldst stand guard.

MISKAH. I'll take thy message, O my master. But her consent means madness. (*She disappears through the curtains.*)

HAJJ. (*Left alone, smiles.*) "Madness !" "Valiant stride !" (*He sits erect.*) "Noble stranger !" O Hajj ! Thou wast not so mistaken in thyself. There's a something, a somehow about thee—no doubt of that !

(*He draws out his sword using the blade as a mirror by which to arrange his moustachios.*)

(*The curtains part again—MISKAH re-enters.*)

MISKAH. She comes ! (*She glides rapidly to the door left and sits listening.*)

KUT-AL-KULUB enters, a voluptuous woman of the ripe oriental type—she is about eight and twenty. Her dress is very rich, over it a gorgeous mantle. Her veil is of the thinnest.)

KUT-AL-K. (*Kneeling before him.*) Welcome and well come to my illustrious lord.

HAJJ. A thousand blessings on thy white forehead, O mistress of my days.

KUT-AL-K. Allah, forgive me ! Only the wildness of

despair could drive me to break the bonds of my harim.

HAJJ. I am earth to thy treading.

KUT-AL-K. (*With a sigh and exaggerated emotion.*)
Now, by my life! I knew mine eyes beheld a king
the instant they lighted upon the grace of thy
being. Help me! Help me! I am oppressed
beyond endurance.

HAJJ. Who art thou? One of Mansur's wives?

KUT-AL-K. (*Springing up, indignantly.*) One——? I
am the Wife of wives?

MISKAH. S—sh!

HAJJ. His first? The great lady?

KUT-AL-K. First in fact. Yet might I be the least
and lowest—a blackamoor kitchen wench—were I
to be ranked by his reckoning.

HAJJ. Never tell me he ceases adoring thee even for
the wink of an eye-lid.

KUT-AL-K. (*Shrilly.*) Cease adoring! He!

MISKAH. (*Warningly.*) S—sh!

KUT-AL-K. (*Turning to HAJJ, with appeal.*) Behold
this arm! (*She produces a gorgeous arm from her
cloak.*) Is this arm shrivelled? Shrunk?

HAJJ. (*Admiringly.*) Shrivelled? What dog says
shrivelled?

KUT-AL-K. (*Opening her cloak.*) This bosom yellow?

HAJJ. (*Overcome.*) Yellow, this field of lilies?

KUT-AL-K. (*Turning back.*) Now tell me, by thine
honour: callest thou me hump-backed?

(*She drops the cloak and turns round revealing her
form, provokingly clad in scanty splendour.*)

HAJJ. O thou copious beauty! Am I a boy that
thou shouldst mock me thus?

KUT-AL-K. (*Unveiling her face.*) Or is my face pock-
pitted? My nose crooked? My mouth crumpled?

HAJJ. Allah help me! What art thou doing to me,
O cruel one?

KUT-AL-K. (*With a gliding step as she approaches him languorously.*) And my gait? (*Making slow gestures.*) Is my motion like a popinjay's on a perch? (*Coming close to him and sitting on the diwan below him.*) My glance the stare of a dead thing?

HAJJ. O sun of the age! Dazzle not my sight to blindness! Strike not my senses to frenzy.

KUT-AL-K. (*Feigning surprise, veiling her face, and turning from him.*) Woe upon me! Hath my rage disrobed me?

HAJJ. O light of splendour, cloud not thy rays. Shut me not in blackest darkness.

KUT-AL-K. (*Lifting her veil a little from her face, coquettishly.*) So much?

HAJJ. More.

KUT-AL-K. So much?

HAJJ. More.

KUT-AL-K. (*Dropping her veil completely.*) O thou man among men! Why must I obey thy bidding? (*She looks down provokingly.*)

HAJJ. (*Drawing close.*) What is thy name?

KUT-AL-K. Kut-al-Kulub, the food of hearts.

HAJJ. In very sooth, thou art the food of hearts. I could feast on thy plenty for ever and yet be an-hungered still.

KUT-AL-K. Alas! Why have I never heard words like thine till now?

HAJJ. (*Coaxing.*) Never till now?

KUT-AL-K. (*Coyly.*) By my head, never! All day and all night I sit alone under my silent dome, in the fever of my solitude; my tears my sole consolers.

HAJJ. Tears! Thou must let me come to thee and kiss them away.

KUT-AL-K. (*Pretending horror.*) Art thou mad?

HAJJ. Aye, maddened by the insolence of thy beauty.

KUT-AL-K. (*Rising and turning from him, provokingly.*) Allah! Kiss me? Thou? Out on

thee ! 'Tis easily seen thou art loved too much, by too many.

HAIJ. (*He follows her, comes close to her, and suddenly says in a very businesslike way.*) When shall it be ?

KUT-AL-K. (*Dropping all artifice, eagerly.*) This evening—early—with the new risen moon.

HAIJ. How shall I reach thee ?

KUT-AL-K. Come to this courtyard. My faithful slave of the firehole shall await thy coming and lead thee by an unknown passage under the baths straight to the heart of the harim.

MISKAH. (*Springing up, anxiously.*) O mistress !
(*She points to the door.*)

(*HAIJ kisses KUT-AL-K. on the lips. She tears herself away and hurries off through the curtains followed by MISKAH.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*With a final glance.*) Allah !

HAIJ. (*Flinging his arms out in ecstasy.*) Allah !
(*Hearing MANSUR, he quickly resumes the position on the floor, in which MANSUR left him.*)

(*MANSUR re-enters clad in armour, followed by KAFUR and AFIFE.*)

MANSUR. O Wazir Hajj—are thine eyes ready for me to open ?

HAIJ. Ready, O my master.

MANSUR. Swear that thou wilt never reveal what I shall unveil. (*He resumes his seat on the diwan.*)

HAIJ. I give thee the bond of Allah, to whom belong honour and glory.

MANSUR. 'Tis well. How prompt art thou to do a deed ?

HAIJ. (*Kneeling.*) Order me do, and 'tis done.

MANSUR. (*After a pause.*) Kill the Caliph.

HAIJ. (*Thunderstruck.*) The—Caliph ?

MANSUR. I said what I said.

HAJJ. The Caliph! The Viceroy of the Prophet!
Shed his sacred blood?

MANSUR. Sacred? Abdallah? A toy to a tutor?
Prince Omar should be reigning in his stead.

HAJJ. Prince Omar!

MANSUR. Yehh! He's no parchment-worm! He's
a man, a warrior, a king to the core.

HAJJ. And were Prince Omar Caliph—how would
that help my cause?

MANSUR. 'The hour he's proclaimed Caliph, that
hour am I Grand Wazir. Once Grand Wazir, there's
no favour too lofty for thee to climb to.

HAJJ. Yehh! But why choose me for the deed?
Me, from all the servants that encircle thee as the
white of the eye doth the black.

MANSUR. I wish to honour thee.

HAJJ. (*Not without humour.*) Honour me less, I
pray thee.

MANSUR. Wouldst thou have me pick a fool for such
work? I tell thee, thou art the man.

HAJJ. (*Confused.*) Awah! The Caliph! To at-
tempt to approach him surrounded as he is ever by
a body-guard of ready scymitars!

MANSUR. Nought so easy. He holds his diwan after
mid-afternoon prayer, dealing decrees to great and
small, bidding and forbidding. Didst thou not say
ertswhile thou knewest how to juggle?

HAJJ. Trick on trick! Oft I play them at my
corner! A wizard from Morocco was my teacher.

MANSUR. The very device! Even such another
Moorman shalt thou stand to-day before the Caliph
seeking protection as a stranger. I'll turn it so
that he bids thee unfold these tricks of thine. Do
thou, by thy skill, draw him step by step from his
throne, till he pass beyond the circle of safety and
stand unguarded, unheeding by thy side. Then
sudden plunge thy dagger.

HAJJ. The guards would cut me down.

MANSUR. Once the Caliph killed, the command of the guards falls unto me.

HAJJ. Ask aught else. This I cannot.

MANSUR. (*Half aloud as to himself, temptingly.*)

Hajj, the Wazir! The Wazir Hajj!

HAJJ. I cannot kill Allah's messenger. Cut off my hand and let me go.

MANSUR. (*Rising.*) Let thee go? Now? Thy hand to ransom thee with such a secret in thy heart? By the Venger of villainy, thou shalt not leave this house alive! 'Tis either my cup companion, or (*pointing,*) down into the vaults of oblivion.

HAJJ. Was it for this I was raised to favour?

MANSUR. (*Sneeringly.*) For thy beauty—mayhap?

HAJJ. (*Clenching his hands.*) The Caliph. I cannot! I cannot!

MANSUR. 'Thou art a coward.

HAJJ. Not for myself. But I have others in my life. Affections that bind me. I have a daughter. Awah! (*He grovels on the ground.*)

MANSUR. (*With a sudden look at KAFUR.*) Young? Unmarried?

HAJJ. Unmarried. Awah!

MANSUR. Fair?

HAJJ. Fairer than fair. With a voice like a nightingale's. A thousand songs are hers. When she dances—the gates of Paradise are opened.

MANSUR. (*Doubtfully.*) Sayest thou so. (*He makes signs to AFIFE and KAFUR, unobserved by HAJJ.*)

HAJJ. I tell thee she is a slice of the moon! With lips tender, and waist slender, and graces countless, no tongue can render.

MANSUR. By Allah! Thou hast set me afire. I'll take her to wife.

HAJJ. (*Overcome.*) Thou? The Wazir Mansur—my Marsinah?

MANSUR. Even so.

HAJJ. (*Rising—still doubting.*) Wife?

MANSUR. Yea, wife—not concubine. My other wives will I put away from me. She shall be first of them all.

HAJJ. Thou'lt swear it?

MANSUR. Swear it? (*He raises his right hand.*) The Opening Chapter of the Koran be between me and thee upon this. Afife, Kafur, be ye sponsors to our compact before the Most High. (*He holds out his right palm.*)

HAJJ. (*Putting his right palm against Mansur's.*) Ye have heard.

AFIFE AND KAFUR. (*Together.*) We have heard.

MANSUR. So be it. I'll make her mine at sunset. The eunuchs of the harim shall bring her hither this self-same hour.

HAJJ. Nay, let me go with them. Such tidings shall she learn from none save her father. (*He moves to the door.*)

MANSUR. Hold! A little question! How stand we as to the Caliph?

HAJJ. The Caliph? Now thou hast sworn to marry my daughter, by Him the Most High, the One, the Omnipotent, here do I swear to stab the Caliph to death this day.

MANSUR. (*To the others.*) Ye have heard?

KAFUR AND AFIFE. (*Raising their right hands together.*) Amin!

MANSUR. (*Raising his hand.*) Amin!

HAJJ. (*Raising his hand.*) Amin! (*A moment's silence. From the distant minaret comes the call to prayer.*)

MANSUR. (*Sanctimoniously.*) O my brothers, the call to prayer.

HAJJ. (*In the same tone.*) Prayer!

(*With one accord they all kneel and bend devoutly to Meccah.*)

[CURTAIN]

SCENE II

The Courtyard of a poor House. (The same scene as Act I. Scene III.). The hot sun of the afternoon is kept off by some awnings. The birds in the cages hang on the wall.

MARSINAH is seated on the bench, her lute in her lap.
She sings:—

I.

Under my veil
What hide I not?
Now cheeks so pale,
Now blushes hot:
Under my veil!

II.

Under my veil
What hold I not?
The sweetest tale
Of kisses got,
Under my veil!

NARJIS. (*Coming out of the house with a large water-jar and going to the well.*) Out upon thee, singing away thy day! An'thou help me not in the house, I'll take away thy trinkets.

MARSINAH. Touch me, and my father shall hear of it!

NARJIS. Thy father! 'Twill be long ere thou seest thy father again.

MARSINAH. I'll not believe it.

NARJIS. I tell thee this sudden wealth—(*With a gesture of thieving.*)—came but by way of his fingers. They've found him. They've taken him.

(*A knock on the house door.*)

MARSINAH. Yehh! 'Tis he!

NARJIS. Or the watch come for thy anklets.

MARSINAH. (*Hiding her anklets as she sits.*) O Narjis !

(*Another knock.*)

NARJIS. (*Hurries to the door calling out.*) Here am I ! Here am I ! Who knocks ?

HAJJ. (*Outside.*) I ! Thy master. Open, O Narjis.

NARJIS. Allah ! 'Tis thy father. (*She unlocks the house door.*)

MARSINAH. (*Springing up.*) What said I ?

(*Enter HAJJ. He is, of course, in his brilliant Persian gown with his silver sword in his belt.*)

HAJJ. Where's Marsinah ? (*He enters the court.*)

MARSINAH. (*Overcome by his appearance.*) O my father ! What fresh magnificence is this ? Did they set thee free ?

HAJJ. (*Looking at NARJIS.*) What hast thou been saying to her ? Calling me thief behind my heels ?

NARJIS. Not a word, O my lord. I am thy slave of admiration.

HAJJ. O slippery mouth ! Are thieves clad in robes of honour ? Are thieves given swords of office ?

MARSINAH. By my youth ! 'Tis all silver.

HAJJ. 'Twill be gold before night.

MARSINAH. Gold ?

HAJJ. And before yet another night all jewels and gems.

MARSINAH. Gold ! Jewels ! O king of fathers ! Hast thou discovered some enchanted treasure ?

HAJJ. Yea, a treasure for me and a treasure for thee ! My dreams are dreams no longer. They are alive as the breath of thy lips. (*To NARJIS.*) Go fetch me my bundle of magic.

NARJIS. All the tricks ?

HAJJ. All, and the robes.

NARJIS. Hearing and obedience. (*She goes into the house at back.*)

HAJJ. (*To MARSINAH.*) Thy birds!

MARSINAH. My birds? Thou wilt have a care of them as ever? (*She brings the bird cages to him.*)

HAJJ. Care? Care matters not now, O my doe! Thou shalt have braver birds than those ere long. Flocks of white ones and black ones to fly at thy beck and call.

MARSINAH. White ones? Black ones?

HAJJ. (*Laughing.*) Ha! Ha! My large-eyed wonder! Human birds; slaves! Slaves!

MARSINAH. (*Amazed.*) I—slaves?

HAJJ. (*Squats and looks into MARSINAH'S eyes.*) Larger and larger! As many as thy whims cry out for. O Marsinah, child of mine! Allah hath poured blessings untold upon thee. Thou art to be wed to-night.

MARSINAH. (*Joyfully.*) O my father! Thou hast seen him! (*She glances up at the garden wall.*)

HAJJ. Him? Whom?

MARSINAH. (*Confused.*) Him!

HAJJ. Thy husband? Seen him? I am his cup-companion, the friend of his bosom, his wazir to come.

MARSINAH. His wazir?

HAJJ. Indeed, how canst thou guess? There! I'll play with thee no longer. Know thy full happiness. Thou art to be wife to the Wazir Mansur.

MARSINAH. (*Breathless.*) Mansur?

HAJJ. He! What sayest thou now! Has thy joy stifled thee quite?

MARSINAH. (*Blankly.*) Mansur? (*She sinks down, staring before her.*)

HAJJ. Yes, say it! Say it! Till thy heart learneth to hold it! To beat to its measure! Mansur! Mansur! Mansur! Mighty now, mightier still

ere long! His wife! None above thee, none thine equal!

MARSINAH. (*Faintly, looking up.*) O my father, I kiss the ground. Wed me not to this man.

HAJJ. (*Rises.*) Not? Not?

MARSINAH. Not to him, O my father. I pray Allah's pardon, not to him.

HAJJ. 'Tis Mansur I speak of—the Wazir of Police. The favoured of Fortune. Him thou art to wed, to be his great lady, his wife of wives.

MARSINAH. Alas, my long grief! Say it not again, I entreat thee.

HAJJ. Say it not again?

MARSINAH. O my father. Thou'lt not do this to me.

HAJJ. Not what?

MARSINAH. Not give me to him. Not to him.

HAJJ. Thou shalt be his by sundown.

MARSINAH. Sundown? Sundown? This night?

HAJJ. How oft must I say it!

MARSINAH. By the Ineffable! May I be thy ransom here and hereafter! But this,—this,—by the warmth twixt my heart and thine, the sacred bond of child and parent, do not this thing to me, O my father and lord, not this!

HAJJ. Art thou raving?

MARSINAH. O sweet my father! Gentle my father! Father of the true eyes and tender! Thou didst love my mother! Thou wert her salvation, her soul's consolation in the hour of her need! By her memory, I conjure thee.

HAJJ. (*Gently.*) O Marsinah, my gazelle, rise! What sudden fright is thine? Has the might of Mansur's name o'erwhelmed thee?

MARSINAH. O, 'tis not his name! 'Tis not fright! 'Tis—(*Sits up, with sudden horror.*) I cannot go to him! I will not!

HAJJ. Will not? Will not? Now woe to thee, O thou daughter of sin! May Allah never bless thee!

Is such my recompense for all the years of toiling and moiling, of cark and care? Have I worked at my begging from dawn to dusk, screamed myself hoarse for thy sake? And dost thou now cry out, "I will not?" "Will not!" to me, thine own father?

MARSINAH. (*Quieter.*) Pardon me, O my lord. I meant—I cannot. I cannot!

HAJJ. Cannot, forsooth? Cannot! Art thou all my soul holds dear on earth, and come I here to thee with the tiding of tidings—and thou like the hyena snarlest and bitest the hand that feedeth thee? Why canst thou not? Why wilt thou not? What is the why of thy why? Speak!

MARSINAH. Awah! Awah! Awah! (*She weeps on the ground.*)

HAJJ. (*Squatting by her side, imitating her.*) "Awah! Awah!" By Allah! Verily he was a suffering father who said: "a son is the lamp of a dark house—a daughter a desolation."

(*NARJIS comes out of the house, with a robe and a bright kerchief.*)

NARJIS. (*Seeing MARSINAH on the ground.*) What's here?

HAJJ. Comest thou too? A pretty child I have, indeed! A pretty spirit thou hast fostered in her.

NARJIS. I—O my master?

HAJJ. Thou—O hell hag. Look on her! There she lieth grovelling and howling like a kicked dog, so the whole quarter will wonder and come rapping on the door. And what for? What for? Because the honour of honours has fallen upon her and she is to be wife to the Wazir Mansur.

NARJIS. Mansur's wife! By the prophet, is this so? (*She comes to MARSINAH and kneels beside her.*) O Marsinah! Hath thy star risen at last?

MARSINAH. O Narjis, I wish not to be his wife.

HAJJ. (*Rises.*) I wish not! I cannot! I will not!

Whose wife then wouldst thou be, O thou misery?

MARSINAH. I know not. No one's. If our neighbour the gardener had a son—his wife would I be.

NARJIS. I've told thee before—he hath no son.

HAJJ. Ha! The old man, the gardener, a son? He, with a face like a cobbler's apron? Ha! Ha! Thou art jesting. 'Tis well. Thou hast fooled me long enough. Dry thy tears. Dry thy tears, I tell thee.

MARSINAH. I am not jesting. Sooner would I die than go to the Lord Mansur.

HAJJ. By my soul—sayst thou true?

MARSINAH. By thy soul. (*She holds up her right hand.*)

HAJJ. (*With intense rage.*) Now Allah damn the mother that bore thee, and the father that begot thee! May thy bones rot and thy body be flung on the ash-heaps beyond the gates of the city—thou child of abomination, thou shame unforgettable! We shall see! (*He goes to the street door and opens it—calling.*) Ho, masters! Hither!

(*TWO EUNUCHS of the Guard of the Harim enter. MARSINAH veils herself.*)

HAJJ. (*To the Eunuchs.*) This way! Lead ye this maid to your Lord Mansur! Her life be on your heads.

(*The EUNUCHS cross to MARSINAH and lay hands on her.*)

MARSINAH. (*Making a final appeal to her father, kneeling.*) O my father.

HAJJ. (*Sternly.*) Away!

MARSINAH. Awah! Awah! Awah!

(*She is dragged off by the EUNUCHS.*)

(*HAJJ and NARJIS look at each other and nod their heads with utmost content.*)

[CURTAIN]

SCENE III

The Caliph's Diwan (Audience Hall). On the lower left side, raised by a few steps, stands the Caliph's diwan or throne : below it, to its left, a single gold cushion, the seat of honour. At the back and to the right a lofty row of arches opens onto a terrace from which can be seen the whole city of Baghdad. To the right, benches for the dignitaries of the court. At the end of the terrace left, behind the Caliph's throne, a great tower with a massive door which leads down into the prisons. The architecture is of the finest Arabian. The view of Baghdad is gorgeous and sun-lit.

The young CALIPH is seen seated on his diwan, magnificently robed. By his side stands a low table with a vase, from which rises the single rose given him by MARSINAH. Now and again he takes the rose and smells it. Above him stands the Wazir ABU BAKR. Later on, he seats himself to the left of the CALIPH, in the place of honour. Behind the throne stand ARCHERS with their lances, and on its steps the GUARDS with scymitars drawn.

THREE ELDERLY MEN in Egyptian costume kneel before the throne. Behind them stands a mummy-case with FOUR BLACK SLAVES. In the background kneel female MUSICIANS and DANCERS—eight in all.

The CHAMBERLAIN approaches the throne and prostrates himself.

CHAMBERLAIN. O Prince of True Believers, the Ambassadors of Egypt stand before thee bearing a petition and gifts for thy gracious acceptance.

CALIPH. Display the gifts.

(The CHAMBERLAIN takes their petition to the CALIPH. Music strikes up.)

(The AMBASSADORS bow and sit on the bench, right. At a signal the SLAVES open the mummy-case, and an Almah (a dancer) steps out, who does a strange, peacock-like Egyptian dance, ending in a seductive posture at the feet of the throne. The FOUR SLAVES carry the mummy-case off to the right.)

CALIPH. *(Turning to the three Egyptian men.)* O Wazirs of Cairo, return ye to Egypt and tell our viceroy I accept his gifts of these slave-girls and will consider his petition. *(To the CHAMBERLAIN.)* See robes of honour be bestowed on the Ambassadors.

CHAMBERLAIN. Harkening and obeying.

THE THREE AMBASSADORS. *(Bowing low and speaking together.)* Allah increase thy glory, O Commander of the Faithful.

(Conducted by the CHAMBERLAIN, who crosses to them, they withdraw.)

CALIPH. *(To the dancers and musicians.)* As for ye, O damsels, this hour I grant you freedom and a purse of ten thousand dirhams to each of you. *(To an attendant.)* Conduct them in all honour from the palace.

(The ATTENDANT leads the MAIDENS off by the terrace, the Almah following them with a final appealing gesture to the CALIPH.)

ABU BAKR. *(Kneeling before the CALIPH.)* O King of the Earth, may thy tutor speak to his charge of many years?

CALIPH. Speak, O my father.

ABU BAKR. Of a truth, thou committest a wrong, O my lord, in despising thus hourly the gifts of fair women. Hath Allah not created thee a man in thy manhood?

CALIPH. Seest thou this rose? 'Tis holier to me

than the red rose of the Prophet ! Now by its holiness do I swear to thee, to-night shall put an end to my singleness.

ABU BAKR. Thou hast found what thou seekest ?

CALIPH. The while thou didst ponder over the revenues of the kingdom, I took my pleasure in thy garden. And lo ! 'The Bestower sent what I prayed for—a sweet maid of a thousand wonders. After sundown I will ride forth to bring her home in full pomp, as she were a princess from a kingdom afar.

ABU BAKR. And who might this Chosen of the chosen be, O my lord ?

CALIPH. Who ? (*Smelling of the rose.*) The partner of my dreams, the half of my heart, my first love and my last. (*He takes a golden bead and throws it into a cup on the table: it rings like a gong.*)

(*A HERALD with a trumpet enters from the terrace.*)

CALIPH. Let the diwan begin !

(*The HERALD bows, and goes out onto the terrace again.*)

(*ABU BAKR moves to the left of the throne, and sits on the golden cushion.*)

HERALD. (*Blows his trumpet, then speaks.*) Whoso hath authority, let him come to the Caliph's Carpet of Justice !

(*SLAVES unroll a gorgeous carpet before the throne.*)

(*Stately music begins.*)

(*The CHAMBERLAIN enters with a volume of the law which he brings to the throne, he then retires below the throne to the furthest left corner, behind ABU BAKR.*)

(After him follow SIX DIGNITARIES of the Household, who bow to the CALIPH, and seat themselves near the columns leading to the terrace.)

(Crowds gather outside on the terrace behind the arches.)

(TEN WAZIRS and KAZIS enter, making their obeisance and going to their seats at the right.)

(Finally MANSUR arrives, followed by KAFUR and AFIFE. MANSUR crosses and bows to the CALIPH, remaining before the throne.)

(FOUR NEGRO ARCHERS follow and place themselves between the columns at the back, drawing their scymitars and so forming a barrier to keep the crowd from entering the hall.)

(The music ceases.)

(The CALIPH signs and all the WAZIRS sit.)

MANSUR. O Commander of the Faithful! Would heaven thou hadst not wearied thyself by honouring thy slave with a letter. The accountings of my treasuries are ready and in full tale. They shall be at thy feet to-morrow before noon-prayer.

CALIPH. It is well.

(MANSUR bows and goes to his seat right, in front of the other WAZIRS.)

(There is a murmur of conversation among the WAZIRS.)

(The CALIPH throws the bead into the cup a second time.)

HERALD. *(Blows his trumpet again.)* Whoso hath grievance, let him come to the Caliph's Carpet of Justice!

CHAMBERLAIN. *(At the foot of the throne, left, stepping forward and unrolling a roll.)* In the name of the Judge of Judges, peace and silence. *(The crowd*

ceases murmuring.) The first case: Jawan the highwayman. By command of the Wazir Mansur.

MANSUR. (*Rising.*) O Gracious Sovereign! The mighty Monarch that forewent thee, did banish all robbers from Baghdad both by writ and proclamation. Yet this one is come to flaunt it in the white sunlight as though the word of our beloved lord had been vain as a rain-shower in the sea. Hence ordered I the outlaw before thee.

(JAWAN *approaches from the terrace, right, supported by TWO ARCHERS.*)

CALIPH. Canst thou not walk without aid?

JAWAN. (*Kneeling and bowing.*) O Commander of the Faithful, Allah hath smitten my limbs with a curse. Thou seest my hours are numbered. I came not to Baghdad with evil intent. I came to pray for salvation at the tombs of the saints, hoping that my gift of alms would somewhat wipe out mine offending.

CALIPH. Thou hast given money to the poor?

JAWAN. Send to the high priest of the cathedral-mosque. I seek refuge in him and his knowledge of my charities.

CALIPH. By all the laws of the realm thy life is forfeit. Yet 'tis written "Better a generous sinner than a stingy saint." Go one of you to the high priest. (*To one of the KAZIS.*) Kazi Shimas, thou. Inquire into this. (*To JAWAN.*) An thou sayest sooth, repentance and alms have won for thee the kerchief of pardon. (*Gesture with handkerchief.*)

(*One of the WAZIRS rises, bows, and goes off through the arch right.*)

JAWAN. Thy sentence is just as the scales of judgment day!

CALIPH. Nay, hear me out. Till word be brought, thou shalt to prison.

JAWAN. Prison?

CALIPH. A short penance for thy long list of sins.
Take him away.

JAWAN. Allah preserve and prosper His regent on earth! (JAWAN bows to the CALIPH and is led off into the prison-tower.)

CALIPH. What is there to follow?

CHAMBERLAIN. (*Consulting his list.*) The case of a Moorish juggler. By command of the Wazir Mansur.

MANSUR. (*Rising.*) O Prince of True Believers. This Moorman is a most marvellous wizard. Yet by his very excellence has he roused the jealousy of our native fellows of his craft, who would drive him out of the city. Hence doth he come to kneel to thee for protection.

CALIPH. Baghdad never yet grudged hospitality to the stranger of worth. Bring hither the Moor.

CHAMBERLAIN. The Moor!

(*An ATTENDANT echoes the Chamberlain's call and voices are heard without repeating: "The Moor! The Moor!"*)

(*HAJJ enters from the right through the columns. On his shoulders like a pair of scales, he balances a pole, the two bird cages at either end,—his magic cloth in his hand.*)

HAJJ. (*Coming forward and kneeling.*) O Light of Islam—here lies thy slave between thy hands!

CALIPH. Art thou this famous Moorish magician?

HAJJ. O King, I am as famous as I am Moorish, as Moorish as I am magician.

CALIPH. An thou prove thy repute, thou shalt remain unmolested within our walls.

HAJJ. Try me and be thy judgment my doom.

CALIPH. Allah granteth thee this. Begin.

(*HAJJ bows to the CALIPH, slips off his cloak and waves his magic cloth in a circle.*)

HAIJ. Round is the sky !
 Round is the eye !
 Round is nought !
 Round is wrought !

(Throwing the cloth over his shoulder mysteriously.)

By Iblis curst ;
 By devils worst ;
 By every name :—
 Flame, fire, flame !

(He produces a bowl of flaming fire from his cloth.)

CALIPH. *(Coming down the steps a little.)* Allah !
 Good.

(HAIJ sets the bowl on the floor.)

(The CROWD murmurs approval.)

HAIJ. *(Pointing to the bird-cages.)* O King of glorious degree and never ending ! Look thou next on these two cages ; one harbouring a fair bird of maiden whiteness ; the other a bird black as the royal banner of thy house. Now even as yon flame of fire, so doth the flame of longing scorch the hearts of these hapless lovers, caged apart. Say me then, shall I invoke a kindlier lot upon the two, bringing them breast to breast ?

CALIPH. *(Who during the speech has come down from his throne ; eagerly.)* Is't easily done ?

HAIJ. Most easily. *(He waves his magic cloth with his left hand and quickly draws his dagger with his right.)* As easily, O my lord, as this ! *(He gives the CALIPH a violent thrust.)*

CALIPH. *(Sinking backwards on the steps of the throne.)* Awah !

ABU BAKR. *(Throwing himself between HAIJ and*

the CALIPH.) O villain! O hound! Seize him!
Pinion him!

(*Hajj is surrounded in an instant by the GUARD. Indescribable confusion ensues. The WAZIRS start from their seats. The crowd breaks through the guards. All shout and try to get at Hajj. Cries such as these are heard:*
"Tear out his eyes!" "Rip out his heart!"
"O son of Satan!" "Crucify him over the city gate!" "Scorch his eyes to blindness!"
"Chop off his accursed fingers!" "Cut out his tongue!" "Into the flames with him!"
"O dog!" "O hell hound!" "O son of perdition!" "Down with him!" "Down!")

ABU BAKR. (*Bending over the CALIPH.*) How is't with thee?

CALIPH. (*Recovering himself and mounting the throne.*) Silence! Silence! (*He throws the bead into the cup.*)

CALIPH. Silence! (*Comparative silence.*) Touch not the man. Touch him not, I say.—I am safe! Allah hath shielded me by the grace of my coat of mail. (*He displays it.*)

(*Gradually absolute silence is restored.*)

MANSUR. (*With unction.*) Praise Eternal to the Preserver of our King.

ALL. "Praise to the Preserver!" "Amin!" "A thousand years to the Caliph!" "Life forever to Abdallah" etc.

(*The cup is struck again. All regain their respective places.*)

(*Hajj is brought forward, held by FOUR BLACK ARCHERS. His whole appearance is dishevelled. He looks deathly pale.*)

(*Outside the day begins to wane.*)

CALIPH. Why didst thou this?

HAJJ. (*After a moment.*) I know not. The crime was foredoomed me by Fate.

CALIPH. Before the whole world, in the place of places, in front of my palace, there shall thy soul be stripped from thee, shred by shred. Into the Prison of Wrath with him.

HAJJ. Nay, hear me! Hear me! I was tempted beyond measure.

CALIPH. How's this? Who tempted thee?

HAJJ. I have sworn silence.

CALIPH. By my holy office of Imam, I absolve thee of thine oath. Speak.

HAJJ. (*Half looking round at MANSUR.*) I—cannot.

CALIPH. The key of torture shall soon unlock thy lips.

HAJJ. Torture! Nay, by the Pardoner, since thou dost absolve me, there sits he who tempted me! The Wazir Mansur.

ALL. (*In amazement.*) “Mansur?” “The Wazir?”
“He?” “What says he?”

CALIPH. Mansur?

MANSUR. (*Rises, glibly.*) The man's be-devilled, O my lord. Bewitched by fiends. I know him not.

HAJJ. Know me not? I have shared my salt with him. He swore to make my daughter his bride, would I but end thy days. Kafur, Afife! Bear ye witness!

CALIPH. (*With surprise to MANSUR.*) How's this? He calls thy men by name?

MANSUR. What of that? Mayhap the villain has frequented my halls in search of some favour. Nay, now I look on him—true. I've done the dog a kindness. He came indeed to offer me his daughter, and I accepted of her. Yet not for myself, O King, but to serve my scavenger blackamoors.

HAJJ. (*With a cry of horror, trying to throw himself on MANSUR.*) Ah!

(The ARCHERS restrain him, he struggles madly.)

CALIPH. *(Calling out at once.)* Silence him !

(One of the Archers from behind slips a black cloth over HAJJ's mouth.)

(The sky is lighted with the blaze of sunset.)

MANSUR. Yet though the drab be now in my harim, by the Koran I swear, O King, even as this day ends red so shall she end red this day.

CALIPH. This matter is too full for the crowded course of the Diwan. I shall examine into it apart—after sundown. No ! *(He takes up the rose half unconsciously.)* Not after sundown. Tomorrow. *(With a significant look.)* O Mansur, fail thou me not. Thy words do far from hush my doubts in thee.

MANSUR. Harkening and obedience.

CALIPH. I shall sit in my scarlet of anger. Let the executioner be notified. Off with the wretch. Not a crust, not a drop to him. No hospitality shall bind us. He shall be made a warning to all, the blackest death in Islam ! Away !

(HAJJ is dragged off through the prison-door, impotent and bound.)

(A general murmur among the crowd.)

(The CALIPH puts down the rose and throws the bead into the cup.)

(Silence.)

CALIPH. What case have we to come ?

CHAMBERLAIN. *(Taking up the list.)* The case of Kabirah, the widow.

(The little old woman of the Bazaar appears and totters forward, kneeling before the throne.)

[CURTAIN]

SCENE IV. *The Prison of the Palace.*

The place is dark except for a small barred window in the right wall, high up. Through this come the red rays of the setting sun, which fall on the wall, left—a brilliant patch creeping slowly higher and higher.

Under the window in the shadow lies JAWAN, the highwayman, an unrecognisable heap.

A moment of silence. Then the door is unlocked and unbolted and creaking loudly, to the rattle of keys, it admits KUTAYT, the Gaoler, a huge, dark-skinned man of brute force. He pushes open the door, and crosses to some chains fixed to an angle that juts out, left, under the patch of sunlight.

Outside is heard the shuffle of feet and blows. HAJJ appears directly, pushed and driven by the FOUR BLACK ARCHERS. His mouth is still covered with the black bandage. The ARCHERS drag him to the wall, left, where KUTAYT stands ready to clap the chains on his wrists.

KUTAYT. (*Turning HAJJ round.*) What outlandish garments have we here? Not Arabian. How? (*HAJJ gives a muffled reply.*) (*KUTAYT pulling the bandage from his mouth.*) How?

HAJJ. (*Breathless.*) Moorish, O my master.

KUTAYT. Moorish! Hoo! Hoo! Wilt thou buy straw from me?

HAJJ. I have no money.

KUTAYT. No money?

HAJJ. Not a danik.

KUTAYT. (*Shouting.*) Nothing? Shall I waste my breath sucking of an empty bottle? Here with thy paws, O misery! (*He claps the chains on HAJJ.*) Yehh, what a life is mine, crushing lice! (*He throws HAJJ down on the ground.*) Lie there, thou

vermin. Moorish ! (*He spits on HAJJ, then follows the others banging the door to behind him, bolting and locking it from without.*)

(*A moment of silence.*)

HAJJ. (*Groaning.*) There is no majesty nor might save Allah ! Is it this I have come to ? (*Rattling the chains, he sinks down beating palm on palm in despair.*) O thou purse ! Thou little purse flung me at sunrise ! Thou hast been mine undoing ! Thou wast from Satan ! From him, mine enemy. O Jawan ! Jawan ! As Allah is my witness, may thy soul be cast down into the fires of hell to burn and boil to infinity without end.

(*Out of the gloom of the opposite wall comes JAWAN'S sharp voice, half mockingly.*)

JAWAN. Who calls me ? Can it be thou, O Hajj ?

HAJJ. (*Amazed.*) Allah ! (*He sits up.*) Art thou an Ifrit speaking ?

JAWAN. No Ifrit, O brother. No spirit of air or fire. But thy flesh-and-bones enemy, whom thou dost curse so sweetly.

HAJJ. Jawan—thyself—here ?

JAWAN. Even as thou, O my friend of long ago.

HAJJ. (*He laughs.*) Ha ! Ha ! By Allah ! Thou here ! And through me ! For 'twas I who told Mansur of thee ! My prayer is answered. We shall end side by side. 'Tis well. I die content.

JAWAN. Why art thou here ?

HAJJ. For attempting the Caliph's days.

JAWAN. The Caliph's ? Thou ? Then art thou indeed dead.

HAJJ. Even as thou art.

JAWAN. Nay, I shall be free. I tell thee I shall live, live to see my son. Yehh ! As clearly as I see him now with the eyes of the heart. As clearly as I saw him last with the eyes of the head. (*In an*

exalted strain.) There he stood, my Yusuf, in the wold and wild, by my tent, the dust-cloud of the coming foe walling the horizon. I made him kneel before me and blessed and kissed him. And as I did so an amulet hung forth from my breast. I broke it in half—a hand of Fatimah. (*He taps his chest.*) Half I kept for myself, here. The other I fixed on the chain round his neck. By that broken half shall I find him again. I know it.

HAJJ. (*Laughing derisively.*) Ha! Ha! After twenty-five years? Thou art in thy dotage.

JAWAN. Allah will give him back to me. I have gone to Mecca thrice. All my moneys have I spent in charity.

HAJJ. Charity? Will charity quicken my little son, whom thou didst slaughter? Charity restore the wife thou didst rob me of? I tell thee thou shalt surely die to-morrow. Thy blood and mine shall mingle together on the thirsty ground. That is my sole consolation, the honey in this my bitterness.

(*The lock is heard to turn and the door is unbolted. KUTAYT reappears with a document in his hand.*)

(*The sunlight begins to fade.*)

KUTAYT. (*Going to JAWAN, holding out the document.*) The Commander of the Faithful has lent ear to the pleadings of the High Priest. Thou art pardoned and released.

JAWAN. Allah prolong the Caliph's days of Glory!

KUTAYT. Canst thou climb the stairs unaided?

JAWAN. Where are my slaves?

KUTAYT. Thy slaves? Alas! When they saw thee prisoner they turned and fled!

JAWAN. Whoreson knaves! How shall I get me from here? (*Chinking a purse.*) This purse of fifty dinars, an thou canst find me a litter.

KUTAYT. (*Obsequiously.*) O my lord, there is a

stretcher above to carry away the dead. Will that suffice thy graciousness?

JAWAN. Anything, so I need no longer weary thine hospitality. He! He! He!

KUTAYT. (*Laughing politely.*) Hoo, Hoo! Hearing is obeying.

HAJJ. (*Eagerly.*) Am I pardoned too? Am I free?

KUTAYT. Hoo! Hoo! Pardoned? Free? Wait till thy tongue's torn out, thine eyes scorched to blindness, thy body nailed to the dome over the Gate of Destruction. Then wilt thou be free—indeed—at last! Hoo! Hoo!

HAJJ. (*Tugging at his chains.*) Allah damn thee for thy mocking!

KUTAYT. Hoo? Curse me, O thou? That for thee, thou offal, thou stench. (*He strikes HAJJ over the head with the huge door-key. HAJJ with a cry totters, then sinks on his knees and faints.*) How? Fainted? Hoo! Hoo! Fainted. Rose-water for the Princess! Rose-water and fumes and ambergris! Fainted! (*Turning and bowing obsequiously to JAWAN.*) O my lord, thy litter shall be with thee on the instant.

(*He goes off and slams the door, bolts and locks it.*)

(*Silence.*)

HAJJ. (*After some groans, slowly returning to consciousness, in the whining tone of the beggar, not realising where he is.*) Alms for the love of Allah! For the love of—— (*He awakes slowly to his surroundings; with a cry of horror.*) Ah! I am here! I am here. 'Tis over—is it? Is it over?

JAWAN. He! He! He! 'Tis not yet begun.

HAJJ. 'Tis not? (*Coming to the full realisation of things.*) Thou! Now I know. Thou! Oh! The sun is setting! Red! Red! (*With a sudden cry.*) Mansur!—Thou fiend of lowest hell!

“Even as the day ends red, so shall she end red this day!” O Marsinah! O Marsinah! And I in prison—in chains!

JAWAN. He! He! He!

HAIJ. Laugh! Thou canst laugh? Thou the beginning—thou the end of my sufferings! (*Tugging at the chains.*) O Allah! Give me strength. Make these strong arms doubly, trebly strong! Put all the power of a lifetime into these sinews; only for once, O Allah, that I may snap these maddening chains in twain!

JAWAN. Never! Never! (*He laughs jeeringly.*) He! He! He!

HAIJ. Once! Only once! (*He tugs, he twists, then with a wild cry of delight he has broken himself free.*) Free! Free! The Granter hath granted!

JAWAN. (*With terror—breathless.*) Wah——

HAIJ. (*Sitting up, very quietly.*) At last!

JAWAN. (*Trembling.*) What—what art thou thinking?

HAIJ. (*Rises.*) What—what? (*He crouches slightly and slowly, step by step, like a wild beast, creeps over to JAWAN'S corner.*)

JAWAN. No nearer! I have a knife.

HAIJ. A knife—hast thou?

JAWAN. 'T has served me a thousand times. Luck's written on the blade.

HAIJ. Luck? I take my luck. (*With a cry.*) Allah is all great! (*He springs into the dark at JAWAN.*)

(*A fierce struggle as of two panthers fighting. Groans, hisses, heavings and cries. After a minute—silence. Then HAIJ emerges from the dark.*)

HAIJ. (*Breathless and fervently.*) O Allah mine, thou hast given me this hour. Behold my sacrifice to thee. At last, at last, I am avenged! Avenged! (*Laughing bitterly.*) But my Marsinah!—Oh spare

her, O Lord of justice, spare her from Mansur and the horror of his harim. (*A thought striking him.*) The harim! Kut-al-Kulub! The Wife of wives! Even now she is waiting for me! If I could reach her! She'd help me to save Marsinah! She'd—(*He goes to the door pounding on it desperately.*) Free! Free! Free!—(*He stops and turns hopelessly.*) Madness! (*Looking at JAWAN's body.*) They'll find him the moment the litter comes, and then—(*With sudden inspiration.*) The litter! Allah! Dost Thou open the door of escape? Dost Thou? (*Wildly.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! If it succeed! If it succeed! (*He goes into the corner to the body.*) The cloak! The turband! The purse! In his sleeve,—his breast? (*He comes across the chain on his breast.*) The chain! The broken hand of Fatimah! (*Imitating JAWAN.*) "I shall see my son again! I shall find him!" Wilt thou? (*He takes off the chain.*) Wilt thou? (*Putting it over his own neck.*) Hang thou here on my neck now thou broken hand of Fatimah! I shall find him, so Allah will it. I shall! Ha! (*He finds the purse and chinks it.*) Fifty dinars! For the gaoler! Good! Now off with thy cloak. What? (*He stops and listens.*) Nothing. Nothing. Keep thine eyes cool and clear, O Hajj. Cool and clear. (*He returns to the body.*) So! So! Thou shalt play the Moorman now, O my king. Dead. Ha! Ha! Thou art dead, dost thou hear? And yet, O dead one, 'tis thou shalt draw me out of my grave—me thy slayer! (*He drags the body to where he lay fainting when the gaoler went out and covers it with his own cloak.*) So! Lie thou there! Quiet! Budge not, I pray thee. Faint! (*He turns to JAWAN's cloak and turband.*) Now for mine own beautifying! (*As he picks up the garments he sees the knife which he discarded.*) The knife! Luck's written on the blade. (*He puts the knife into his*

belt.) Luck! So be it. Luck shall carry me into the street. Luck let me leap from the litter! Luck bring me to the harim and to thee, O my Marsinah, O my——(*The door outside is unlocked.*)

(HAJJ *throwing the cloak over himself, hurries into JAWAN'S dark corner and lies down.*

KUTAYT *reappears with a lanthorn, followed by two men with a rough stretcher.*)

KUTAYT. The stretcher, O my lord.

HAJJ. (*Coughing and imitating JAWAN'S voice.*) Here! (*He throws the purse.*)

KUTAYT. (*Picking it up and examining it by the light of the lanthorn.*) Allah bless thy journey. (*To the men as they lift up HAJJ.*) Carefully. Lift the Sheikh of sheikhs carefully. (*He chinks the purse and turns to the dead body.*) How? Still fainted! Hoo! Hoo! Look, O my lord——(*He goes to the body and raises up an arm.*) Still fainted!

HAJJ. (*As the litter is lifted up and carried out, imitating JAWAN'S laugh.*) He! He! He! (*He is carried through the door.*)

KUTAYT. (*Dropping the arm.*) Rose water! (*Kicking the body.*) Rose water! Hoo! Hoo!

HAJJ. (*From the staircase, without.*) He! He! He!

(KUTAYT *turns slowly and follows the litter, slamming the door behind him.*)

[CURTAIN]

End of Act II

ACT III

102 BEFORE THE CURTAIN

NIGHT

The MAN enters from his house, seats himself and sings :

Lo ! Now the night lies on the city's breast,
And thousand thousand lovers rise from rest
To seek in truth, what day unveiled in dream:—
The one, the all, the maiden manifest.

The WOMAN enters from her house, seats herself and sings :

Lo ! Now the heav'n pours down its silver stream
Into the lattice of my heart's harim !
The hour comes, the night of nights is nigh,
That bindeth soul to soul in bond surpreme.

The MAN

Yehh ! That some flaming dance might glorify
The moments of my sweet expectancy !

The WOMAN

Yehh ! That some liquid Almah's ebb and flow
The ocean of my love might amplify !

BOTH

O Thou, Bestower of all things, bestow
This benediction on Thy servants low !

The DANCER enters and weaves the spell of Destiny about the MAN and the WOMAN. They rise and approach each other singing :

The day belongs to man, to woman night:—

HE : } { And so I give to thee thy lawful right, }

SHE : } { And so I claim in thee my lawful right. }

Sealing our compact of eternal plight,

O thou, my longing, and my soul's delight !

The DANCER smiles in triumph and vanishes.

The MAN and the WOMAN embrace and go out hand in hand through the Curtains of Fate.

A C T III

EVENING

SCENE I. *The Hammam in the Wazir Mansur's Harim.*

The scene represents a colonnaded courtyard, the centre of which is occupied by a large, marble swimming pool. The front part of the scene is under the portico of the colonnade. At the back may be seen three large arched windows screened from the outer world by elaborate traceries. The main entrance is an arch or double door, left. A grated trap to the right, partly concealed by a rug, leads to a secret passage below. There is a couch to the left ; behind it stands a brazier of burning incense.

The court is of the most delicate architecture ; white marble with green and azure traceries.

It is early evening ; the moonlight floods the courtyard from the right, and finds its way into the portico, from the ceiling of which hang several lamps, shedding dim light.

KUT-AL-KULUB, in gorgeous robes, lies reclining on the couch, a slave holding up a mirror before her. Another one is sprinkling perfumes, and a third blackening her eyelids.

Various groups of women are seen reclining by the pool ; some are robing, others combing their hair.

To the right sit FOUR FEMALE MUSICIANS with lutes, harps and tambourines. One of them is singing :—

O lute within my lap, o'er thee I bend
 My sobbing child of love, thy cry to tend
 With mother's breast. Yet still as I do give
 Thy yearning groweth ever without end. Ah—!
 O sweetest loss ! O milk of melody !
 What though my heart go forth in yielding thee !
 Thus would I die a thousand deaths, than live
 Frozen and barren to infinity ! Ah !

(During the song a YOUNG GIRL, wrapped in a long garment, enters followed by a NEGRESS. She steps to the swimming pool. The NEGRESS takes the cloak from her and she plunges into the water.)

(MISKAH enters from the door, left, and glides to KUT-AL-KULUB'S couch.)

KUT-AL-K. *(Turning impatiently.)* Thy news ! Yet answer me nought but he is come ; he is waiting ; he has mistook the secret entrance !

MISKAH. O my mistress, would my tongue might say yes. Alas ! He's nowhere to be seen. But thy slave of the fires is watching for him with burning eyes.

KUT-AL-K. I could have thee whipped for thy words.

MISKAH. No stranger hath passed the door-keeper, nor man nor woman, saving a weeping damsel the eunuchs brought this mid-afternoon.

KUT-AL-K. Damsel ? What damsel ?

MISKAH. She is destined for thy lord, they say. They are guarding her in the first hall of the harim.

KUT-AL-K. What fresh intruder is this ? Bring hither the slut !

MISKAH. Harkening and obedience.

(She hurries off through the door.)

KUT-AL-K. (*Looking at herself in the mirror.*)
Another? By the days of my beauty! And he—
(*To the slave dressing her hair.*) O thou fat-fingered
fool. Art thou not done yet? Take thy hot hands
from my head!

(*The women near the pool have splashed the girl
in the water. She suddenly turns and pulls
one of them into the pool. There is a loud
scream and much splashing and laughter.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*Irritated, sits erect on her couch, claps
her hands and shouts at the top of her voice.*)
Cease your noise! Cease your noise, I say!
(*Claps her hands again.*) Allah! Must I call the
guard? (*The WOMEN are gradually silenced.*) Out
on ye, ye shameless ones! Get ye to your couches,
each and all. The hour grows late.

(*The WOMEN in the bath are seen to swim
towards the right end of the bath. Others
in the arcades go off to the right as well.
Suppressed laughter and whisperings.*)

(*KUT-AL-K watches them impatiently.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*To the MUSICIANS.*) Go ye as well!

(*The MUSICIANS rise and follow the others.*)

(*KUT-AL-K sinks down on the couch.*)

(*MISKAH re-enters with the TWO EUNUCHS,
conducting MARSINAH, who is veiled.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*To the EUNUCHS.*) Leave her with me.
She shall be safe in my keeping. (*The Two
EUNUCHS bow and retire.*) What have we here?
(*Sarcastically.*) Peace be upon thee, O wonder of
loveliness concealed.

MARSINAH. And upon thee peace, O my lady, and
Allah's benediction.

KUT-AL-K. (*Half aside to her women.*) A voice like
unto choking honey. (*Pointedly to MARSINAH.*)

Wilt thou not favour us by revealing the fountain of so much sweetness?

(*She leans forward toward MARSINAH.*)

MARSINAH. (*Unveils and kneels, bowing low.*) O my lady, I am thy slave.

KUT-AL-K. (*Annoyed by MARSINAH's beauty.*) My slave, art thou? My slaves come not before me with no henna on their hands, eyes unkohled, cheeks riddled and raddled with tears. Who art thou? Who sent thee hither?

MARSINAH. My father. The Wazir Mansur has chosen me to be his wife.

KUT-AL-K. Wife—thou? O thou cotton-refuse! O thou pickings! Thou his wife? A handmaid to his wife perchance, or handmaid to the handmaid, more likely.

MARSINAH. 'Tis not of my seeking! Allah is my witness! I longed not for a harim of glitter and gold. Mine was a far different dream.

KUT-AL-K. (*Sarcastically.*) Sayst thou so?

MARSINAH. O mistress dear, thou art the high lady here, thy lord's love of loves. Turn thou thy white hand of pleading towards Mansur for me. Win thou my freedom, and thou wilt give life not to me alone, who am a nought and a nothing, but also to one who is waiting and watching this night, waiting and watching in vain.

KUT-AL-K. Yehh! What light do I see in the lattice? So thy little heart is caught in the mighty net of love. (*The SLAVE GIRLS giggle.*)

MARSINAH. Why should I answer no? Thou art a woman. To thee I need not hide what I dared not confess to my father. Yehh! I love a youth, to the very core of my bosom do I love him; a youth fair of face, and rich in grace; none gentler, none nobler in all our race.

KUT-AL-K. A pretty verse, forsooth. And surely

there are further rhymes to follow, such as "enlace" and "embrace." (*She smiles at her SLAVES, who giggle at her gibe.*)

MARSINAH. He hath kissed me, 'tis true.

KUT-AL-K. (*With a sarcastic laugh.*) Ah! Ah!

MARSINAH. Oh, but in all honour. This sunset he was coming to beg my father's consent to husband me.

KUT-AL-K. Was he! Was he!

MARSINAH. By the life of my youth, he was. I should be bespoken by now, had not sudden fate doomed me to become Mansur's wife.

KUT-AL-K. Wife! Say thou wife again and I'll have thee slippered till thou liest fainting at my feet. Wife thou! A thing kissed and clasped by another! What devil hath blown conceit into thy nostrils? (*Calling out.*) Ho Kádím! Ho Taváshi! Hither! Take her away to the kitchens!

(MARSINAH veils herself.)

(*The TWO EUNUCHS return and approach MARSINAH, laying hands on her.*)

KUT-AL-K. I'll soon "wife" thee, thou scum of the slave market, thou baggage of ill-omen and insolent!

MARSINAH. O spare me these cruel hands, O sweet lady, spare me, spare me!

(*At that moment MANSUR enters through the courtyard from the right. He is sullen and his manner shows, though only slightly, that he has been drinking. He has a cup in his hand. KAFUR follows him. All the WOMEN crouch at MANSUR's approach.*)

MANSUR. Hold! What to do is here?

KUT-AL-K. (*Rises on her knees and turns to him in her most seductive manner.*) O my lord—thou?

What blessed fate brings thee at this unwonted hour?

MANSUR. (*Ignoring her.*) Who is yon woman?

KUT-AL-K. A nought! A slave girl! An offering of ugliness some friend hath sent thee in sport. Wilt thou not smile on thy Kut-al-Kulub, O my king?

MARSINAH. (*Crying out.*) Ho Mansur!

KUT-AL-K. (*To the EUNUCHS holding MARSINAH.*) To the kitchens with her! And at once!

MARSINAH. (*Breaking away from the EUNUCHS, she kneels before MANSUR, calling out.*) To my aid, O my lord; I lay hold upon thy skirt, in this my calamity.

(*The EUNUCHS are about to seize her again but MANSUR stops them with a gesture.*)

MANSUR. (*Coming to her.*) Who art thou?

MARSINAH. I am Marsinah, the daughter of Hajj—thy cup-companion.

MANSUR. Hajj's daughter, art thou? (*Sneeringly.*) Now Allah requite thee that thou art come! His daughter! Ha! (*To KUT-AL-K.*) And ugly to boot, sayst thou? Yehh! The liar, the son of filth! Juggle this trick besides, would he? 'Tis well!

KUT-AL-K. (*Sarcastically.*) She swears thou hast chosen her thy wife.

MANSUR. Doth she?

KUT-AL-K. (*Indignantly.*) And that, after confessing she hath been loved by another.

MANSUR. Yehh!

MARSINAH. (*To KUT-AL-K.*) By Allah, this is not allowed! To betray what I have told thee between mine eyes and thine.

MANSUR. So she has been loved, has she—this (*with a great sneer*) maid! I am to eat broken bread from other men's tables! Broken bread!

MARSINAH. (*Rises.*) 'Tis a lie! My loved one's loving is not of the colour of thy loathsome lusting. 'Tis white as the turband of the Prophet. Nor can thy villainous tongue spot its purity.

MANSUR. Ha! Ha! So great a fire in so small an oven? Yehh! Here will be a pleasing thing to rake and quench.

MARSINAH. (*Kneeling, pleading.*) Oh, as thou art powerful, be merciful. Forgive my fury. My lips know not what they say. Thou seest I am alone here, helpless as the fly in the tent of the spider. Have thou pity on me, so Allah have pity on thee.

MANSUR. And how can Allah have pity on me before I yet have sinned? Oh, my hidden delight, I beseech thee unveil first, that I may learn the hell I am to fall to, through the curse of thy comeliness. Unveil, I tell thee.

MARSINAH. Never!

MANSUR. Never! Thou'lt not? (*He flings away his wine-cup.*) Thus to thy likes! (*He goes up to her and seizing her roughly, tears the veil from her face.*)

MARSINAH. Awah! (*She bows her head in shame, her long black hair uncoiling about her.*)

MANSUR. By the Creator—she is beautiful—exceedingly!

KUT-AL-K. (*Biting her lips.*) Is she?

MANSUR. (*Turning to KUT-AL-K and thrusting her down on the couch.*) O thou viper, what made thee say otherwise? Jealous, art thou? Ha! Ha! Still! (*To MARSINAH—watching KUT-AL-K.*) Thou art love-some and lovely, O my blossom, O my palm-bud. Thou shalt indeed be my bride this eventide. (*He caresses her head.*)

MARSINAH. (*Rising and shrinking away.*) If I pass this night here, I shall kill myself with mine own hand.

MANSUR. Trouble not thy hand! For at dawn, O

Marsinah,——(*He runs his hand down her arm.*)
at dawn thou shalt pay for thine insolence with
gorgeous untold sufferings, such as my soul never yet
devised.

(*He smacks his lips.*)

(MARSINAH *shudders.*)

(KUT-AL-K *sighs with satisfaction.*)

MANSUR. (*To KUT-AL-K.*) Thou art satisfied?

KUT-AL-K. (*Smiling.*) I am all thine, O my master.

MANSUR. 'Tis well! (*To the slaves.*) Up! Robe
my bride! Hang jewels upon her! Rob what is
best from the splendour of my Wife of wives.
(THREE SLAVE GIRLS and the NEGRESS *hurry off
hastily to the left.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*Furious.*) My robes? My jewels?

MANSUR. (*Sardonically.*) Saidst thou not "I am all
thine"? (*To MARSINAH.*) Go, O my ruby! Seek
thy setting, O my bride of blood. (*To the slaves.*)
And look you, she doth no harm to her sweet body.

MARSINAH. (*Blanched and staring, is led off through
the courtyard; suddenly she turns defiantly.*) Be this
the end that Allah hath ordained me—'tis well!
Yet the Judge of Judges is not unjust. He hath
power to change our fate between the shutting and
the opening of an eye. Thy hour will come. Thy
death will find thee!

MANSUR. (*With a gesture to the slaves.*) Away!

MARSINAH. (*In a high voice.*) And black will it be,
O Mansur! Black as thy doomsday record! (*She
screams as she is dragged off by the EUNUCHS.*)

MANSUR. (*Calling after her.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! Thy
rage but feeds me! Ha! Ha! There's something
still in life! Something! By Allah! This night
will I make a night among nights! Ho Kafur!
Prepare my bath of scents! Hot and heating let it
be! So that my tired pulses may beat—beat!

(KAFUR *bows and hastens into the courtyard.*)

MANSUR. (*Stopping him.*) And call thou the women !
Let them come forth wildering to the wits, seducing
to the senses ! Song, and perfumes, and dance till
sunrise ! What though the Caliph reap my head to-
morrow, these last hours shall be locked in my
breast, mine own !

(KAFUR bows and vanishes.)

KUT-AL-K. (*Kneeling before MANSUR and throwing
her arms about his knees.*) Thus do I love my lord.

MANSUR. (*Smiling on her.*) Dost thou, in sooth ?

KUT-AL-K. Yehh ! Bid me do aught to add to thy
content, and I'll do it.

MANSUR. (*In a playful tone.*) Wilt thou ? Wilt thou ?

KUT-AL-K. I swear it.

MANSUR. Thou ? (*He looks down at her, smiling,
then suddenly spits in her face. Turning away
with a chuckling sneer.*) Thou—O bosom of burning
desire, go thou and sleep ! (*He hurries off through
the courtyard.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*Shaking with rage, her hands clenched,
she groans.*) Wah ! Dog of hell ! Poison thee I
could ! Poison thee ! (*She sits on the couch beating
it impotently with her fists.*) Poison ! Poison !
Poison !

MISKAH. (*Hurries across to her, trying to soothe her.*)
O dear my mistress ! Doth Destiny not decree all
things for the best ? If thy lord be lost in the arms
of Maisinah, wilt thou not be freer for him whom
thy soul desires ?

(*A gentle tapping is heard.*)

KUT-AL-K. He'll not come ! He'll not come ! 'Tis
long past the hour ! Fate curses me ever !
He'll not come——(*Louder tapping.*) O Miskah !
Hark ! (*She sits erect and eager—pointing to the
trap. The tapping is repeated.*) 'Tis he ! Unbolt.

(KUT-AL-K reclines on her couch, assuming
indifference.)

(MISKAH goes and unbolts the grating, lifting the trap.)

(HAJJ enters, still wrapped in JAWAN'S white cloak.)

HAJJ. Peace to thee, O my lady of radiance. I am thy slave in very truth. My heart is between thy hands. (*He kneels and bows.*)

KUT-AL-K. Thou? By the life of mine eyes, I had forgot thee quite. Comest thou at this hour?

HAJJ. Be not an-angered, O my princess. I have faced death sevenfold to venture to thee to-night.

KUT-AL-K. Hush! My lord is within the harim.

HAJJ. (*Thinking at once of MARSINAH.*) Mansur? In the harim? Is he alone? No one with him? No woman?

KUT-AL-K. Belike so . . . What matters it?

HAJJ. Was a maiden brought here a little while since?

KUT-AL-K. Yes. What of her?

HAJJ. Doth Mansur know she's here?

KUT-AL-K. (*Impatiently.*) What is't to thee? The moments are slipping away. O my loved one, dost thou not love me? (*She smiles on him.*)

HAJJ. (*Distracted.*) Love thee? Yea, yea, I love thee. (*He smiles a vacant smile at her.*) The maiden—the maiden is where?

KUT-AL-K. What maiden?

HAJJ. Marsinah.

KUT-AL-K. (*Suspiciously.*) Marsinah? How comest thou to know her name? What is this wench to thee? Who is she?

HAJJ. She is my daughter.

KUT-AL-K. Thy daughter.

HAJJ. I have said it.

KUT-AL-K. Thy daughter! (*She rises, stands on the couch, and bursts out, laughing angrily.*) Ah! Ha! Ha! Thy daughter! Is such thy love for me? Thou must needs send thy daughter to him? A

slip—a snippet—a chick unfledged ; her must thou send, for Mansur to make mock of me to her naked face. Yehh ! A sweet love, a deep love ! Allah ruin thee for it.

HAJJ. Mock thee ! What has he done ?

KUT-AL-K. What ? He has chosen her wife of the night,—sent her to deck herself out of my coffers.

HAJJ. (*Hopefully.*) Yehh !

KUT-AL-K. Yea, but heaven is just ! Dawn shall put an end to her life.

HAJJ. (*Rising, terrified.*) Who told thee that ?

KUT-AL-K. Who ? He, Mansur. Torture is to crown his night of pleasure.

HAJJ. (*With a cry.*) Ah ! Thou wilt save her ?

KUT-AL-K. Save her ? (*Very definitely.*) After my death.

HAJJ. No ! No ! Thou must ! Thou wilt ! O Kut-al-Kulub, thou wilt ?

KUT-AL-K. An she be so wondrous dear to thee, why didst thou offer her to him ?

HAJJ. He swore to make her his wife.

KUT-AL-K. (*Laughing wildly.*) His wife ! Thou dost not know Mansur.

HAJJ. (*Desperately.*) O Kut-al-Kulub, save her, save her ! Slip her into this cloak of mine and let her go with me as I came.

KUT-AL-K. And I be stranglèd after ?

HAJJ. What hast thou to do with another's escape ? How shall Mansur know ?

KUT-AL-K. (*Half to herself.*) Ha ! 'Twere a fit revenge on him ! A feast for the bride, and no bride to feast !

HAJJ. Couldst thou not replace her by some slave girl ? Did he in truth see her face ?

KUT-AL-K. See it ! 'Twas her beauty made him mock me !

HAJJ. How ? She won him as she was brought—unadorned ?

KUT-AL-K. Unadorned, tear-stained, a very misery !

HAJJ. And thou dost hesitate? She can enslave his senses thus, wretched, ragged? What then will she do with jewels hung in her hair, robes rich and fair, her bright eyes kohled, darting love everywhere? I tell thee she'll steal the heart from his breast ! Yehh ! Become queen in thy stead, and thou be lost to his arms for ever.

KUT-AL-K. (*With sudden rage.*) Allah ! I'll be rid of this damned witch come what may ! (*Clapping her hands.*) Ho ! Miskah ! Haste ! Haste ! (*To HAJJ.*) Thy cloak ! Thy cloak !

(MISKAH hurries to her mistress.)

(HAJJ hands his cloak to MISKAH.)

KUT-AL-K. Take it ! Throw it over the accursed one robing in my chamber. Bring her hither. Lose not an instant.

MISKAH. With obedience.

(*She hurries off with HAJJ's cloak.*)

HAJJ. (*Coming to KUT-AL-K and kneeling, with utmost gratitude.*) By Him who fashioned thee in thy splendour, thou art indeed the noblest of thy sisterhood.

KUT-AL-K. (*Dryly—eyeing him.*) Are thy desires contented?

HAJJ. Contented? I kiss the fringe of thy gown, the hollow of thy hand, O thou soul of liberality.

KUT-AL-K. (*Looking at him, her mouth twitching.*) 'Tis well.

(MISKAH re-enters with MARSINAH, who is completely cloaked.)

HAJJ. (*Rising, moving towards her.*) O Marsinah !

MARSINAH. (*Surprised.*) O my father. . . .

(*They embrace.*)

KUT-AL-K. (*Impatiently.*) No words. (*To MISKAH.*) Lead her forth by the secret passage. Out and away with her.

MISKAH. Away? She's in thy richest robes, unworn as yet by thee!

KUT-AL-K. (*Impatiently.*) What matter robes? (*To HAJJ.*) Whither is she to be taken?

HAJJ. I'll go with her.

KUT-AL-K. Wait thou. Let her go first and pass beyond the outer gates. 'Tis safer. Whither?

HAJJ. (*To MISKAH.*) Take her to the Mosque of the Carpenters—to Imam Mahmud. Say I commit her to his charge under Allah. Tell him she's my daughter,—the daughter of Hajj, the beggar.

KUT-AL-K. (*Starts and gives HAJJ a look, which he does not see.*) Hajj—the beggar.

(MARSINAH and MISKAH leave by the trap.)

(*Directly the two have disappeared down the trap,*
KUT-AL-K. goes to the grating and flings it to,
turning round and facing HAJJ.)

KUT-AL-K. (*Hoarsely.*) Hajj, the beggar! The beggar, Hajj. Yehh! Is it to thy like that I have offered amorous mercy? And is it by thy like that I have been laughed to scorn? A beggar! A beggar to sneer at me, to spurn me! I, of the old blood of Egypt!

HAJJ. Heaven forbid I should spurn thee, O my love.

KUT-AL-K. Love! Love! Thou! Thou camest for one purpose alone—thy daughter. 'Tis well! She is saved. But by Allah, not thou!

HAJJ. Not?

KUT-AL-K. We enter the hammam free. Out we pass not unless we pay.

HAJJ. (*With horror.*) Kut-al-Kulub!

KUT-AL-K. The grating is shut; the latch my secret. A blissful night to thee, and a blessed, O my beggar of love. (*She turns to pass him.*)

HAJJ. (*Following and clutching her.*) O, Kut-al-Kulub, thou'lt not betray me! Not doom me thus to my death?

KUT-AL-K. Dost thou touch me, O thou dog?

HAJJ. Yes, I touch thee, I hold thee, I clasp thee!
(*He sinks down before her, clasping her knees in his arms.*) Here on my trembling knees, mine arms about thy white beauty. O Kut-al-Kulub, thou must listen to me.

KUT-AL-K. Off with thine arms, thou filth of the gutter.

HAJJ. Never! Never! Never!

KUT-AL-K. How? Force me? Force? (*She releases herself, shouting.*) Ho, Mansur! Ho, Mansur! (*She hurries to a gong by the door and beats it with her fist.*) O the shame of me! Ho, Mansur!

HAJJ. (*Between his teeth.*) Now Allah kill all woman-kind. (*He turns and crouches in the corner right.*)

(MANSUR appears in the courtyard. He is clad in a thin robe of yellow, as coming from his bath. KAFUR follows him.)

MANSUR. (*Annoyed.*) What now?

KUT-AL-K. (*With supreme scorn.*) Behold! A man in thy harim!!

MANSUR. A man? (*He snatches the sword from KAFUR. To KAFUR.*) Take her within.

(KUT-AL-K turns and as she goes laughs a low laugh, full of the satisfaction of revenge. KAFUR follows her.)

(MANSUR comes down slowly, step by step, sword in hand; he is slightly under the influence of drink.)

(HAJJ lies quite still on his knees, hiding his face behind a cushion he has picked up. MANSUR raises the sword, ready to run at HAJJ.)

(HAJJ lifts up his head suddenly and faces MANSUR.)

MANSUR. (*Starting, amazed.*) Hajj? Am I alive?

HAJJ. Only to die!

(*Taking advantage of MANSUR'S amazement, he throws the cushion at him, warding off MANSUR'S blow of the scymitar. But in trying to pass MANSUR, he slips and falls on his knees sinking backwards. The full moon-light shines on HAJJ, revealing the chain he took from JAWAN'S body.*)

MANSUR. (*About to strike, sees the chain, arrests the sword and gazes intently.*) By the Living! Whence comes that amulet on thy breast? That broken hand of Fatimah! Speak! Nought shall befall thee. I swear it by the One, the Eternal! I mean my words. Look!

(*He throws the sword from him and reveals the other half of the broken hand on a chain on his own breast.*)

HAJJ. (*Amazed.*) Ah!—The Broken hand of Fatimah! Then thou art Yusuf?

MANSUR. Yes, I am Yusuf. Who art thou?

HAJJ. I? (*He steadies himself on his knees; deliberately looking him in the eye.*) I? I am thy father. (*He rises.*)

MANSUR. (*Doubtfully.*) Thou?

HAJJ. Yes, I am he who hath searched for thee year on year, ever since the day the Caliph captured thee, O my son.

MANSUR. (*Beginning to believe HAJJ.*) Yehh! Art thou he in sooth?

HAJJ. Am I he? Canst thou not recall my tent in the wild and wold? And the enemy's dust-cloud walling the horizon? And my bending over thee

and snapping this talisman in twain, giving thee half, keeping half?

MANSUR. I recall it well. Art thou my father?

HAJJ. Look, the pieces fit. (*He joins the two chains.*)
The hand is one, as our blood is. Dost thou still doubt?

MANSUR. Thou? But thou art Hajj—the beggar.

HAJJ. I have been many things since I lost thee, O my Yusuf.

MANSUR. My mother! Her name?

HAJJ. Gulnar.

MANSUR. Gulnar—yes! That was her name. Thou! Fate is a juggler—the greatest of them all.

HAJJ. On thy knees, O true-born son, that I may call down blessings upon thee as I did in the years long gone. Down! Down!

MANSUR. (*Overcome, kneels before HAJJ, bending his head.*) O my father!

(HAJJ smiling in triumph over MANSUR, draws his knife stealthily.)

HAJJ. May Allah send thy soul—damnation! (*He plunges the knife into MANSUR's back between the shoulder blades. It enters up to the hilt.*)

(MANSUR groaning aloud "Wah" and clutching at HAJJ, rises and struggles with him.)

HAJJ. O snake, O son of snake! I have scotched thee! Thee and thy father both in one day.

MANSUR. My father! (*Groans.*) O thou hog of hell!

HAJJ. Yes, thy true father, Jawan, the White Sheikh! He, who defiled Gulnar, as thou wouldst defile Marsinah! Ha! Ha! Allah is just! Scratch, wouldst thou? O thou rat, thou spawn of rat! (*Lifting him up.*) Into the water with thee! Vermin must be drowned.

(*Lifting MANSUR bodily, he hurls him into the*

water. MANSUR tries to climb out of the tank on the lower side, but HAJJ intercepts him, grasps him by the throat, and holds him under the water. MANSUR clutches HAJJ's arm, but in vain. HAJJ leans over the edge of the pool, pushing MANSUR down into the water. MANSUR'S hands can be seen clinging desperately to HAJJ'S arm.)

HAJJ. That's for Marsinah! Marsinah, dost thou hear? How? Swear by the Koran to wed her, and then debauch and torture her? Ha! Ha! 'Twas not written! This bath of thine was written instead. May it profit thee till doomsday. Drink it, dost thou? 'Tis well! Thou wert ever fond of wetting thy gullet. (*A bubbling noise and splashing.*) Take thy fill! Ha! Good, is't? Bubble, bubble! (*A desperate splash. One of MANSUR'S hands climbs higher on HAJJ'S arms.*) What? Whistle? The devils whistle they say. Art thou in hell so soon, joining thy father, the——(*The left hand falls lifeless from HAJJ'S arm.*) At last! Silent bubbles—one,—two,—no more? Nay, look not so large-eyed. 'Tis very simple. The springs of thy life are spent. (*A slight pause. With a sigh of relief, HAJJ draws his wet arm from the water, and kneels with his back to the spectator, his right arm raised to heaven fervently.*) O Allah! Thou hast delivered into my hands the father! Thou hast delivered into my hands the son! Glorified be thy Glory! O Lord of the three Worlds! Thou, the One, the Eternal!

(*A sudden confused murmur of voices, distant cries and the clash of steel. HAJJ turns and sits riveted. The noise increases.*)

(*The door is burst open, and several ARCHERS of the Caliph enter, some with torches, some with scymitars drawn. The CALIPH himself*

follows, his sword unsheathed, his cloak thrown back revealing a gorgeous silver armour and violet robes. NARJIS comes next. KAFUR, AFIFE and SERVANTS of MANSUR'S household crowd in after the others.)

CALIPH. Break open the doors! Find the women! Bring them to me!

(Soldiers hurry off in various directions.)

CALIPH. *(Turning to NARJIS)* Dost thou still swear that Marsinah was brought hither by Mansur's eunuchs?

NARJIS. Did I not see them drag her away from our very door?

(KUT-AL-K' is brought in by the CAPTAIN OF THE WATCH; other WOMEN follow led on by the SOLDIERS.)

KUT-AL-K. *(Kneeling.)* Mercy, O mercy, O Commander of the Faithful!

CALIPH. Where's Marsinah?

KUT-AL-K. Marsinah's fled to the Carpenter's Mosque. 'Twas at the entreaties of yon wretch that I consented to her escape. *(She points to HAJJ grovelling in the dark.)*

CALIPH. *(Turning and seeing HAJJ.)* The Moorman! Yehh! What magic brings thee hither from prison?

HAJJ. Allah hath freed me so I might render thee service. *(Taking a torch from a soldier and holding it over the bath.)* Behold!

CALIPH. *(Looking down into the water.)* Mansur?

KUT-AL-K. *(Gazing into the pool.)* Mansur! Awah! *(She sinks down by edge of bath with a wail.)*

HAJJ. Mansur. Now, say me, have I not atoned for my crime?

CALIPH. No deed of thine can wipe out thy attempt upon my life. Thy death is fixed and unalterable.

NARJIS. Wah! Kill the father of Marsinah?

CALIPH. Thou? But thou art the Moorman?

HAJJ. Both! Two persons in one, both at thy feet.

CALIPH. So thou art the sire of her whom Allah hath revealed unto my heart?

HAJJ. (*Looking up.*) Marsinah? Am I then pardoned?

CALIPH. Pardoned? What religion were mine should I pardon the hand thou didst raise against my sacred person? Yet art thou also the father of my chosen bride. Say me then, what shall be thy lot?

HAJJ. Thou art the lord of my neck.

CALIPH. Be thou banished! Banished from Baghdad, from my sight, from the sight of thy daughter. Banished as one who had never been. To-morrow by dawn be gone without the walls of the city.

HAJJ. (*Appealingly.*) Banished! O King, be royal and show me mercy.

CALIPH. I have shown thee mercy far beyond justice. My word is spoken. Go!

HAJJ. (*Bowing his head to the ground.*) There is no majesty nor might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great. (*He rises slowly.*) Woe is me! Woe is me. Ah! Wah! Never to see her again, the daughter of my bosom. Never again to touch her hand, to press my lips upon her eyes. O sons of Adam, beget not children! By Him, the Uniter and Separator, beget them not! The agony of their loss exceedeth far the rapture of fatherhood. Banished for ever! Rend thy robe, O Hajj! Beat thy breast! Thy joy in life is ended. Old age hath fallen upon thee as an icy garment. Dark is everywhere. Ashes! Ashes! (*He reaches the brazier. It has ceased burning some time before. Taking the*

ashes from it, he strews them on his head, then turns to the door, beating his breast.) Out—out, thou cut-off moment of time ! Into the Desert of Desolation with thee, O thou forgotten grain of the sands of man ! Marsinah is dead to thee, thou dead to Marsinah ! Awah ! Awah ! Awah ! (*He staggers out by the door, rending his garment and wailing aloud.*)

[CURTAIN]

SCENE II.

*The street before the Mosque of the Carpenters.
The same scene as at the opening of the play.*

Moonlight.

The BEGGAR KASIM is seated on HAJJ's stone, just as HAJJ installed him at sunrise.

Down the alley from the left come cries of moaning "Wah ! Wah ! Wah !" and HAJJ appears, breathless, dishevelled and tottering. He hurries to the Mosque and knocks frantically at the door.

MAHMUD. (*Coming out and standing on the steps.*)
Hajj ?

HAJJ. (*Sinking down.*) O my father ! I have run to thee clinging from wall to wall in my anguish. Where's Marsinah ?

MAHMUD. She is safe within.

HAJJ. Bring her forth I pray thee. We must flee the city. The Caliph covets her.

MAHMUD. What devil possesses thee ? Take thy daughter from the Caliph ? Rob her of the blessing of blessings ?

HAJJ. I am banished. I must never see her again. And

I love her—to the very clot in my heart I love her!

MAHMUD. Oh Hajj! O Hajj! Look within thee!
How? Ruin thy child and call it love?

HAJJ. Wah!

MAHMUD. When must thou go from Baghdad?

HAJJ. By dawn.

MAHMUD. Dawn! To-morrow the caravans set out for Meccah. Hast thou washed in the well of Zemzem? Kissed the sacred stone? Encircled the holy Kaabah?

HAJJ. (*Crestfallen.*) No, O my father.

MAHMUD. By what right then dost thou call thyself Hajj, the Pilgrim? Naught hast thou done for thy endless days beyond the grave. Thou art no Moslem; no son of Islam. Thou art an infidel.

HAJJ. (*With a cry of horror.*) Ah! O my father! Infidel!

(A sound of distant trumpets, kettledrums and singing is heard approaching from the left.)

HAJJ. The Caliph!—Marsinah! (*Pleading.*) O Mahmud,—Marsinah!

MAHMUD. Conquer thyself. Turn from the world. Seek salvation.

HAJJ. Marsinah!

MAHMUD. I tell thee verily this is thine hour appointed, thine hour of hours. An thou so much as raise an eye to mar thy child's fortune, thy doom shall be flame and fire.

HAJJ. (*In agony.*) Awah! Awah! Awah!

(At that moment the CALIPH'S CHAMBERLAIN, with a wand of office, hurries on from the left and crosses to the Mosque.)

CHAMBERLAIN. O Imam! The Commander of the Faithful cometh to claim the maid Marsinah,

MAHMUD. Harkening and obedience ! Wilt thou enter ?

(The CHAMBERLAIN enters the Mosque, MAHMUD following him. HAJJ stands irresolute, with hands clenched. But as the music approaches, he turns and hides in the shadow of a wall. The Wedding Procession enters from the left, headed by a group of MALE MUSICIANS: SINGERS, about eight in number, with a leader in their midst; THREE MEN with huge tambourines; others with pipes and clarionets. They are singing as they come.)

Bespread the streets with tapestries,
Hang carpets from the balconies;
And from the roof-tops flower-dight
Rain nard, and musk, and ambergris;
The Caliph Moon has risen bright
To seek the Star of his delight.
Then hail unto this glorious night,
When earth makes dim the heaven's light !

(After the Musicians comes the HERALD bearing aloft the black banner of the house of Abbas, followed by THREE COURT DIGNITARIES swinging incense. Next comes the CALIPH, followed by ABU BAKR. Behind the CALIPH walk THREE WAZIRS each carrying a five-branched candle-stick in the shape of an outspread hand. After the CALIPH SIX BOYS with baskets of flowers which they scatter. THREE more DIGNITARIES follow, swinging incense. Then appears a curtained litter of gold borne by TWO NEGROES; on either side of it THREE EUNUCHS with five-branched candle-sticks. A second group of MUSICIANS, consisting of several instrumentalists conclude the procession. As soon as the CALIPH

*reaches the Mosque doors, the procession halts ;
the music ceases and the doors are flung open).*

(MARSINAH *appears on the steps in a flood of
light, beautifully attired and veiled. MAHMUD
and the CHAMBERLAIN follow her.*)

CALIPH. (*Taking a step forward.*) The Peace upon thee !

MARSINAH. (*Looking up.*) Thou——? But thou art the gardener's son ! How is this splendour possible ?

CALIPH. O my Marsinah ! All I have told thee is truth save one thing. I am not what I let thee believe.

MARSINAH. Not the gardener's son ?

CALIPH. Not the gardener's son.

MARSINAH. Greater ? A merchant ?

CALIPH. Alas—even greater.

MARSINAH. A Kazi ?

CALIPH. Yet more.

MARSINAH. A Prince !

CALIPH. Higher still.

MARSINAH. (*Close to him.*) Still—? Who art thou then ? Thou art not—not the Highest ?

CALIPH. The Pardoner pardon me—I am

MARSINAH. (*In awe.*) The Caliph. (*Sinks to her knees.*) Oh, what a boldness hath been mine ! How can I sink deep enough before thee ?

CALIPH. Kneel ? Thou ? Wouldst thou double my shame by begging forgiveness ? Have I lost all thy love ?

MARSINAH. O my lord, how dare I love thee after this ?

CALIPH. Even as I love thee. By the Grace of the Uniter of heart and heart, who hath brought thee to me, and me to thee joining us one and inseparable, from this day to the day when shall come the Destroyer of delights, the Shatterer of palaces, the Ender of all things earthly—till Death !

MARSINAH. (*Rises.*) Is this a dream?

CALIPH.

All things are dreams till Allah sayeth "Be"!
When soul finds soul, as I—Beloved, thee!

MARSINAH.

My life is thine unto the latest hour,
Nor shall Death rob my love's eternity.

(*The CALIPH touches his forehead and his heart, then motions MARSINAH to the litter.*)

(*MARSINAH bows before him, kissing her fingertips and raising them to her brow; then crosses him. She is assisted into the litter by ABU BAKR.*)

(*The Procession moves off to the right, the combined groups of MUSICIANS playing and singing.*)

ALL.

Seat high the maid and bridal throne,
To rule this night of nights alone;
Whilst kneels to her divinity,
The mightiest of monarchs prone.
Then draw the curtain sweet with spice,
On Lord of Lords and Pearl of Price—
He crowned by her virginity,
She by his manhood's Paradise.
And Allah the Uniter bless
Their love with joyance limitless!

(*MAHMUD locks the door of the Mosque.*)

(*HAJJ has risen as MARSINAH goes to the litter, drawn by an irresistible desire to approach her. But MAHMUD's eye is upon him and he hesitates. As the curtains of the litter shut*

over his child, he stands transfixed, a figure of grief against the gorgeousness behind him.)

(The procession is gone but he does not move.)

(MAHMUD watches him closely from the door-step of the Mosque. The song dies away in the distance.)

MAHMUD. O Hajj! Thou hast learnt to renounce.
Allah hath opened to thee the path of Pardon!
Set forth at sunrise without fear.

HAJJ. *(In an exalted strain raising his right hand.)*
Yea! To Meccah! To Meccah!

MAHMUD. And the peace upon thee now and for ever.

HAJJ. And on thee, O Mahmud, peace and blessing.
(MAHMUD goes slowly up the street to the left and disappears.)

HAJJ. *(Stands a moment alone in the moonlight, then almost like a child he says.)* I am tired.

(He turns to his old stone, upon which, to his great surprise, he finds KASIM sitting,)

HAJJ. By my head! What dog art thou? Out of my seat!

KASIM. Thou didst give it me at dawn.

HAJJ. And I take it again at dark! That is Fate!
Up, thou one-eyed curse! Learn to renounce!
To the Caliph I may be dirt; but to dirt I am the Caliph!
(KASIM rises and, dropping the beggar's cloak HAJJ gave him at sunrise, goes off by the alley, left. HAJJ takes it and wraps himself in it once more, then sits down on his seat with a loud sigh of relief.)
Renunciation! There's a sweet smack to it. A taste of having lived! And I have lived to-day. Mine enemies dead,—Marsinah wed,—Meccah to-morrow,—*(He yawns prodigiously.)* My

say is said. So glory be to the One, the Eternal !
He who begetteth not, nor is begot ; the Ruler of
Tide and Time, who sleepeth not. (*Dropping off.*)
And to Mohammed, his Prophet—chosen—amongst
—— Mankind —— Peace and —— ——
(*A gentle snore ; another snore, louder ; another——*)

[SLOW CURTAIN]

End of the Play

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